

# FEAR

☠ HORROR ☠ FANTASY ☠ SCIENCE FICTION ☠



To bite  
is  
to be...

# VAMPIRES!

## NECROSCOPE V:

Brian Lumley on his Vamphyri saga  
**PLUS** an exclusive extract from his  
latest: Deadspawn!

**PRAYER  
OF THE  
ROLLERBOYS**  
Corey Haim on  
skid row...

**SCANNERS II**  
New  
orders





THE WORLD OF FEAR

# ROLL, BABY, ROLL



**Corey Haim's latest movie outing is on skates, but John Gilbert managed to catch him on the phone!**

**C**ult movies usually take several years to gestate, but *Prayer of the Rollerboys*, an unusual SF thriller set in the 21st Century already has two major selling points: teen interest, rollerblade skates and an important message.

Corey Haim, the young Canadian born actor took on the role of Griffin, a young man suborned by the police to crack the neo-nazi rollerboys' drugs operation, because of the hero's concern for family — and the anti-drugs message. 'It has a serious essence to it. It's a cool movie about a boy and his little brother and how that boy takes care of that little brother. It's also about a group that's selling and distributing a futuristic drug called Mist. Griffin gets in there and stops them doing that. He's against drugs and it's all about this kid becoming the hero of this movie.' Haim has made no secret of his own flirtation with drugs. But, it is an addiction which he has kicked.

He was allowed to do most of the hair-raising rollerblade stunts — he played ice hockey whilst growing up in Canada, and has a rigorous training programme when he's not making films. As well as putting on an impressive skating display at the beginning of the movie he 'did all that stuff' in the house and with the motorcycles and go-carts. But they didn't let me do the 360 degree turn, they didn't let me jump onto one truck and they wouldn't let me chase Gary Lee (the leader of the Rollerboys). Corey is sure *Rollerboys* could be a success because of the current resurgence of the rollerblade craze in the United States. 'It couldn't have been bigger than now. Rollerblades are huge. Every magazine and newspaper says it's the sport of the 90s. Rollerblades are fun. It's like they're part of a person.'

## **SPEEDY CHANGES**

Fast cars are also a big part of Corey's life. He's done three movies which involve sleek, mean machines. *License to Drive* is already available on sell through, *Fast Getaway* appears on rental video this month and *Dream*



# NEWS FLASH!



**Young Corey (left) grasps his weapon in both hands and is ready to shoot it out with the Rollerboys (above), after a hot pursuit (right)**

*Machine*, in which he is given a Porsche with a body in the boot, is set for a release later this year. All are thrillers, which he did as a change from horror movies *The Lost Boys* and *Watchers* and his early family dramas, such as *Lucas* and *Murphy's Romance*. *Prayer of the Rollerboys* is about drugs, it's very physical and futuristic. I liked the lighting and the cool wardrobe and the idea of skating to grab the badge. But I also liked doing *Fast Cetauoy*. It's a good movie with real moments. Leo Rossi (who plays Corey's bank robbing father) was really great and the story plot was funny. I like to switch between different types of movies and do different things or it gets...boring...

While Corey has no special affection for blood and guts, Joel Schumacher's vampire film *The Lost Boys* is by far the most successful of his movies. To a point I like horror. I did enjoy *Lost Boys* which was scary, and if a movie like that comes up, of course I'll do it.

*Lost Boys II* has been on the cards and, according to drafts of the script *FEAR* has seen, only Sam (Haim), Grandpa and David (Kiefer Sutherland) return. But, the current storyline is like a re-run of the original and Corey is unsure whether it will ever get the green light. 'I haven't read the script, but I don't think it will ever happen. I heard that the second draft wasn't that great, and when you have a movie that did well you don't do a sequel to it that merely repeats the storyline.'



So, what would he like to do now? Perhaps change sides and play the villain or the vampire? 'I'd like to maybe switch and do something like that. But I also like playing the younger, more innocent, characters.'

He has no definite movie plans now — although we have at least three of his films to see within the next six months — but he has a definite career agenda and there are two directors with whom he'd like to team up: 'I've had a chance to work with some really

great directors, and first time directors. But Ridley Scott is great all round, and I'd like the chance to work with Tim Burton.'

His ambition might not be too far off the mark. Corey Haim is now seen as one of America's hottest young stars, according to the Hollywood press, and his track record of solid movies in different genres should now set him up for any role he might want. Though it would be nice to see him tackle meatier roles.

- Anthony Hopkins recently stayed in Ludlow, our neck of the woods, during location shooting of *E M Forster's Howard's End*, for Merchant Ivory Productions. The film will appear next year, but Hopkins didn't poke even a nose out of his hotel for fear of scaring the locals (*FEAR* in-jokes get worse — ED).
- Movie Magic, the horror film equivalent of Madame Tussaud's, opened its doors on July 5. The exhibition's animated waxwork figures portray famous horror characters in their natural locales and have been created by joint-owners Francis Heeley and British special effects supremo Bob Kean. Admission costs £3.50 and the exhibition is open seven days a week between 10am and 2pm. It is located on Blackpool Promenade, directly opposite Central Pier, where horror fans will no doubt dwarf the holiday crowds.
- Just a reminder that Brian Lumley and cover artist George Underwood will be signing copies of *Necroscope V: Deadspawn* at the Cafe Munchen in London on Saturday July 27, starting at 1pm. You might also like to take this issue of *FEAR* along to get it signed.
- *Terminator 2* opens on July 4 in the United States and on August 16 in Britain — our two-part report on the movie starts next month.
- David Cronenberg's next film, William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*, should open in London during next February. The distributor is First Independent.
- *Omen 4: The Awakening* is due for release by 20th Century Fox during October. Starring Faye Grant, Michael Woods and Michael Lerner — of *The Waltons* television series — the Canadian film follows the evil progression of Damien's daughter, Delia.

## 'SPIRITED' SERIAL KILLER



**The Third Power:**  
He can be  
anywhere...**The**  
**Second Power:** He  
can be anyone...  
**The First Power:**  
**Immortality....**  
**FEAR** talks to the  
stars of new video  
release **First Power**

**G**ary Gilmore is the role model for Patrick Channing, a spirited psychopath who, like the serial killers in Sean Cunningham's *Horrors* and Wes Craven's *Shocker* has come back from the dead after an encounter with the electric

chair. But, he has one advantage over the others: the Power that makes him invincible.

According to *First Power* director Robert Resnikoff, Gilmore, who was put to death for shooting a service station clerk in the early 70s, believed in reincarnation and once said, 'Well, I don't care if you execute me, I'll just come back in the next life.' Resnikoff saw an interesting idea for a film, and *First Power* was born.

It was actor Jeff Kober's task to transform the unreal into a frightening celluloid reality. 'I went in and read with Resnikoff and with Lou Diamond Phillips, and I guess I just embodied the sense of evil they wanted. Channing had a hard childhood, this led him down some untrodden paths figuring out what life is about and what he should do about it. He became a serial killer and cut a few deals with forces larger than himself that seemed to be from the darkest of things.'

Kober built his serial killer with research into the occult and the psychological make-up of mass murderers, and, as the film went into produc-

tion he began to think he might have done his homework too well. 'I've enjoyed the heavier sort of roles and I enjoyed doing this one to a point, and then it went on just a little too long and I spent longer than I would have wanted to in that dark area of the psyche.'

**'Well, I don't care if you execute me, I'll just come back in the next life.'**

Lou Diamond Phillips enjoyed the thriller momentum of the movie, but was surprisingly drawn to the film by the supernatural elements. '*First Power* has the action, pace and suspense of a cop film, combined with a psychological kind of drama. And there's this other-worldly feel, though we're playing it very real and gritty; but my character Russell Logan, is affected by this craziness in the air. He's this guy just trying to do his job, do what he has always known, and

**Lou Diamond Phillips discovers — in his kitchen — that the supernatural is real**

he's thrown these twists that no LA cop should ever have to deal with.'

To prepare for this role, Phillips worked with technical advisor Bob Grogan who was the primary investigator in the Hillside Strangler Case (and was interviewed last year in *FEAR*). Both Phillips and Resnikoff rode around the streets with Grogan, visited LA Homicide and even the county morgue.

Jeff Kober has doubts over the film's reception: 'There will be people who will be offended by it, in that I'm a possessed priest and I stand on an altar and break through a stained glass window, and that sort of thing. It was not gratuitous in any sense, and were it gratuitous I would have been very hesitant to have gotten involved. It's the oldest story of mankind; good versus evil.'

'I don't feel bad that the film's out there. It's entertainment, it's not a moral lesson. I was surprised by the amount of humour in the finished product, which I really appreciate. And there are good scares in it. I don't think it's a great film — it's a good film and very entertaining. I don't think I'd want to go back in and be Mr Channing to change anything.'

And what does *FEAR* think of the movie? Check it out in the review section this issue.

## ROCK SOLID SERVICE!

**Hard rock and horror. If you're interested in one or the other HM Gear of Lincoln has a mail order service that'll kit you out ready for battle.**

**B**arry Randle, one of the founders, says that HM Gear offers a complete merchandising service — including tee-shirts, badges and posters of the most popular metal groups — and that the company was one of the first to enter this particular sales area. 'We began in 1985 with button badges, then started our range of tee-shirts in 1987,' says Barry.

The most popular tee-shirts in their current catalogue are from death

metal bands such as Sepultura, but the range is seemingly infinite with tour shirts from Blind Melon, Poison, Winger, Warrant and Samhain on offer within a price range of £9.95 to £11.95. They also produce trackuits, jeans (washed denim and PVC), and leather jackets with studs around the neck. The huge range of posters includes promos for Slayer, Iron Maiden, Mötley Crüe, Megadeth and Metallica. They are priced at £2.99 each or at £3.49 in tube.

Randle is keen to stress that 'at HM Gear we pride ourselves in providing a whole range of stuff. The reason for our success is that we can turn around orders on the whole range so quickly. We're also interested in the music and between us know all about it.'

HM Gear's new full-colour catalogue contains merchandise from the latest band tours, much of which is fantasy and horror-oriented. It's obtainable from PO Box 157, Lincoln, LN6 3RU. Next-day delivery is guaranteed and Access/Visa are accepted on the hot line 0522 500 577, but you must ring in before 2pm Monday to Friday.

## THE WORLD OF FEAR

# TO SCAN AGAIN!



**After ten years  
Scanners is about  
to explode into a  
sequel....**

**D**avid Cronenberg's 1980 original about telepathic scanners who could home in on people's nervous systems was a chilling work of schlock renowned for its exploding

head scenes.

Now these supernatural talents are about to be unleashed again in Christian Duguay's *Scanners II: The New Order*.

BJ Lone Wolf McQuade Nelson's plot has it that the power of the scanners has since gone relatively unnoticed, except by one Forrester, an unscrupulous police officer, and Dr Morse, a corrupt psycho-pharmacist. They've assembled a group of scanners in order to conduct bizarre and inhuman experiments on them. To keep them in their place they've turned

**Not so much the New Order  
as out of order, when  
Forrester gives David a hard  
time**

them into addicts with the drug EPH-2, and they've recruited renegade scanner Peter Drak to help them establish their totalitarian New Order. However, when Drak gets out of hand, they decide to go for a younger, 'clean', scanner named David. Initially, he's led to believe that Forrester and Dr Morse are on a quest to rid the world of crime, but quickly finds their intentions to be quite otherwise.

Fearing their plans will be obstructed, they re-recruit Drak to deal with David and his sister Julie. David however must go back to the compound for a confrontation with Drak and the hopeful annihilation of Forrester and Morse's plans for the New Order.

The movie is the directorial debut for award winning young Canadian Christian Duguay, previously a director of photography.

Duguay, an accomplished musician, also had a hand in designing the film's soundtrack. Using between forty to fifty tracks, he used mostly organic sounds to create the inner power of the scanners. Creating the track was like re-shooting the film, but I think the intricacies of our sound help give the film its special quality.

J/B Macabre

## MOVIE MAKERS

Apologies to those of you who were once again waiting for the second part of our Movie Makers series. Part Two is in the can, but due to the expansion of the vampire feature in this issue we had to hold the feature. We can, however, promise that double-barrelled second shot — with special effects wizard Derek Meddings — next issue.

## DARK VOICES THE PAN BOOK OF HORROR

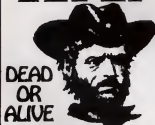


**Dark Voices 3**, the continuing critically-acclaimed replacement for the Pan Book of Horror, is published in October — in time for Halloween. The anthology, edited by David Sutton and Stephen Jones, includes stories from Ramsey Campbell, Brian Lumley, Stephen Laws, Graham Masterton, David J Schow and Melanie Tem.



**X-Men and Excalibur** comics author Chris Claremont's second novel *Grounded* appears from Pan in September. A sequel to *First Flight*, it tells of Nichole Shea's fight to get back into the air when the top brass decide to ground her.

# WANTED



DEAD  
OR  
ALIVE

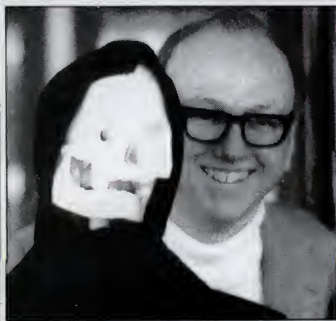
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## THE MUMMY THAT WASN'T

**With Clive Barker involved in a remake of The Mummy for Universal, Logan's Run author William F Nolan shares the vicissitudes of writing for Hollywood with FEAR's Stanley Wiater**

**W**illiam F Nolan is one of those people for whom the cliché—'multi-talented' is, for once, a very accurate description. Although he may ultimately be best-known as the author of the 'Logan' novels (*Logan's Run*, with George Clayton Johnson; *Logan's World*, *Logan's Search*), he has in fact written over 50 books, and been published professionally more than 800 times.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri on March 6, 1928, Nolan has spent his professional career exploring just about every possible genre, from sci-

ence fiction, to mystery, to horror and suspense. After a lifetime of purposely excluding himself from being 'typical' within any one genre, Nolan recently made a major career decision to concentrate in what he prefers to call 'dark fantasy.' So far, this has resulted in the publication of his first horror novel, *Helltrack* (Avon Books, 1990) and a second collection of horror stories, *Nightshades* (Avon Books, 1991), following his *Things Beyond Midnight* (Scream/Press, 1984). With Martin Greenberg, Nolan has edited his first genre anthology *Urban Horrors* (Dark Harvest, 1990), and has had his shorter fiction selected for more than 60 horror anthologies. To further illustrate his renewed devotion to this genre, he has just published an instructional volume for Writer's Digest Books entitled, sensibly enough, *How to Write Horror*. His latest project, however, is a screen adaptation of Peter Straub's *Floating Dragon* for a two-hour TV movie.

'It's a real toughie. I had to eliminate a great deal of material from the book, including a major subplot. In a two-hour television film, because of commercials, you have only 97 minutes of actual screen time. And since one script page equals a minute, we're talking about a 97 page script from a 515 page novel that has all kinds of characters, viewpoints, and subplots. It becomes a matter of selection and compression.'

'Sometimes you'll take three or four characters from the novel and combine their characteristics into one person.

But you'll use parts of the characters' dialogues and their actions for your screenplay. So it is a compression situation. When I'd finished my first long treatment I'd created new material and compressed old.'

'I sent the treatment to Peter in New York and he told me how much he liked it — then presented me with 47 pages of notes! But actually they were 'detail' notes, not 'basic approach' notes; he was indeed happy with the way I'd handled his book. I kept his notes in mind in doing the final draft of the treatment.'

**'I like to be frightened. I don't like to be revolted.'**

### MUMMY IN WONDERLAND

Working for Hollywood can drive a writer crazy, and Nolan likens it to Alice down the rabbit hole.

'This is an absolutely true story — I will not add or dramatise it in any way — I'll simply tell it exactly as it happened. Producer Stan Shpetner calls me up one day and says, 'Look, I've got ABC interested in a new version of *The Mummy*. I'd like you to take a crack at scripting it. Do you know anything about the original movie?'

'And I said, 'Are you kidding?' The Karloff classic? I love that movie! It's horror noir.' So he says, 'Okay, come on over, we'll talk about it.' So we talked. He said the network executives wanted to bring it back to life via scientific means, and did I think that bombarding the tomb with gamma rays would do it? And I said, 'Sure, why the hell not?'

'So we have our meeting with ABC,

and the network people tell us that pyramid power is 'very high right now.' Can we get pyramid power into this story? And I said, 'Absolutely, I can give you pyramid power!' So they said, 'Fine, fine! Get to work!'

For weeks Stan and I plotted the story. One session after another. Which is incredible, because usually I can wrap these things up in outline form in about a week. But Stan was always coming up with new ideas, and, in addition, the network was saying, 'Give us more pyramid power!' And I told them, 'I gave our hero a pyramid-shaped fridge, and in his backyard he reads under a pyramid shaped umbrella. But if you want more, I'll give you more.'

'Then the executives say 'We want a really mean, fast mummy. We don't want him drag-footing along like Karloff.'

'So I say, 'Fine. You got it. This guy will move like Mick Jagger.'

'And he's gotta be strong,' they tell us. So I devise a scene where the mummy tears a parking meter right out of the concrete and smashes it across the windshield of this cop car and the car goes across the street and smashes into a store. And the mummy skitters off down the street, slowly unravelling as he goes, still wrapped up in his shroud after being brought back to life with the gamma rays.'

### FROM WORSE TO BAD

'So the whole concept is getting worse and worse, and I'm starting to think, how did I ever get into this mess? But I want to get paid for my efforts — I'm only getting \$7,500 for this outline, and the real money is on the other end when I get a go ahead for the actual teleplay. So I convince myself to stick with it, because at that time, it would have been \$25,000 for the script. This happened 13 years ago. My rate is now



**Stephen King bids farewell to Castle Rock...**

**Parting is such sweet horror.**

Stephen King's new novel *Needful Things* appears from Hodder and Stoughton in October. It's the last book about Castle Rock and tells the tale of Leland Gaunt, the mysterious owner of a 'we sell anything' type of store

called *Needful Things*. The objects that people buy appear to be ordinary enough, but soon after purchase their new owners begin to suffer in the most alarming ways.

# THE WORLD OF FEAR

*Crime Writing Series*

## HOW TO WRITE HORROR FICTION

How to seductively talk back,  
concoct the perfect horror  
and create nightmare scenes  
which your readers won't  
want to avoid.



WILLIAM F. NOLAN

William F. Nolan's **How to Write Horror: a valuable insight onto the craft, from Writer's Digest Books, out from Robinson Publishing soon**

considerably higher).

'Finally, Stan and I go back to the network for the final meeting. The ABC executives tell us, 'We love it! You've got pyramid power, the gamma rays, you've got a damn strong mummy, and you've got him moving fast. We loved the scene where he kills the blonde in the swimming pool and the cops find this little unwrapped piece of mummy shroud floating in the water. So...we have some good news and bad news for you.'

'Stan and I are sitting there, and we say 'Fine. Give us the good news first.' And the executive says, 'You have a green light. It's a go for scripting.' And I said, 'That's great!' (I could

see the \$25,000 worth of sugar plums dancing in the air). 'What's the bad news?'

'The bad news is that we want one more change.'

'And I said, 'Hey, no problem. I'm Mr Change. You name it, I can handle it. What do you want me to do?'

**'We want a really mean, fast mummy. We don't want him dragging along like Karloff.'**

'Drop the mummy.'

There was this long silence in the office. Stan and I looked at each other, and I remember saying 'You want to do King Kong without the ape? And this executive says, 'We don't need the mummy! All we need is the mummy's curse. After they enter the tomb in the first act, all of our characters die, one by one. At the end there's this big question mark on the screen. Did the curse of the mummy destroy these people, or was it life itself which destroyed them? The executive turns to me. 'What do you think, Nolan?'

'And I said, 'I think I'll leave.' And I did. I walked out and that was that.

### CHEAP SPLATTER

Adaptability obviously has its limitations, and while he writes horror, Nolan has strong ideas about how it should be handled, which have got him into some controversy over the so-called 'splatterpunk' school of explicit horror.

I think it works against the very principles I love about horror on screen and in print. I like to be frightened. I don't like to be revolted. In the fright genre you can do a great deal with indirection rather than by desensitising the audience with overtly graphic, violent acts of horror.

The imagination can create greater horrors than we can ever show on the screen or in a book. As a writer, I don't give my readers or viewers any more information than they need. What is primary in creating true horror is the mood and the build up. I prefer to let the reader and the viewer create the ultimate horrors within their minds. The human mind can conjure up far greater horrors than any set designer. Charles Beaumont called it 'the fiend in you'.

It seems odd that a popular writer of dark fantasy is saying contemporary horror has 'gone too far', but Nolan makes an important point: 'I'm not rigid in my tastes. I can appreciate violence — even overt violence — if it's coupled with really good characterisations, fine stylistic writing, and it's by someone who knows what he or she is doing. But most writers just don't know how to handle violence. With crude, graphic gore you very quickly reach a point of saturation: you're soon looking for something with more depth to it, and I believe that's where the better writers are going to be coming in and staying with us, whether in books or on the screen.'

'I like to think I'm one of them.'



## BACK AGAIN!

Yes, that terror from the toy cupboard is back again. Don't miss the September issue of FEAR which has a full report on the devilish doll's dirty doings in **Chucky 3**.

## BORN BURNING

UNRELENTING TERROR...



THOMAS SULLIVAN

Born Burning, a 'horror and ghosts' novel by Thomas Sullivan, is published by Pan in September. A strangely-carved chair from ancient China causes problems for Joey.



# FEAR FORUM

**An opinion shared is an opinion multiplied...let us — and other FEAR fans — know your views. Write to us at FEAR FORUM, NEWS-FIELD, LUDLOW, SHROPSHIRE, SY8 1JW.**

## UNCUT ALIENS

Dear FEAR,  
I have bought every edition of FEAR for two and a bit years now and must confess that I am addicted to it. Some time last year I seem to remember reading an article about



*Aliens* — the uncut version. I would appreciate it if you could give me some information on where to obtain a copy of this uncut version and how much it would cost.  
David AW Klein, Cobham, Surrey

The uncut versions of both *Aliens* and *The Abyss* were mooted for release last year but, due to some monumental legal tangles, release dates are suspended indefinitely. We will, of course, keep you up-to-date.

## NO MATCH

Dear FEAR,  
Congratulations on continuing your excellent magazine, etc. Thanks for including the Dan O'Bannon bit, even though one month late.

In all charity, I cannot agree with John Gilbert's verdict on *Highlander 2*. No way is it an equitable successor to the original — it's not even in the same class!

The script is self-contradictory and meshes with the story of the original as well as if it had been stuck on with old dry Blue-Tack. General Katana's antics are pointlessly violent — note that it's not the violence I object to, but the pointlessness. The action is disjointed and has nothing like the same logical flow of the original.

What is so frustrating about the sequel is that it has its good points. The idea of the shield could have been developed much more creatively, and with it the degeneration of McCleod. As it is, this promising opening becomes a background to a wholly inadequate and irritating yarn about aliens.

Particular points of irritation: why should Conner MacCleod sign himself as MacCleod in a sea pilot's log, when in the first film we know he took pains to conceal his true identity? Why play a tune firmly associated with Scotland at Ramirez' second demise, when Ramirez is not Scottish? For that matter, what did the Shield Corporation have that chamber with the rotating fan for — just in case someone came along whose head they'd like to cut off?

No, sorry, come off it John. *Highlander 2* is dull, pointless, insulting rubbish in its own right, let alone compared with the wonderful original. Pray God there isn't a third!  
Paul Nash, London N17

John Gilbert replies: Our post bag contained a large caucus of readers against *Highlander 2*, which makes it surprising that it hit the Top Ten at the box office. I still reserve my right to enjoy this movie — particularly since no-one sent us a screening invite and, unusually, I had to pay for the privilege — even if I too did not think it was as good as the original. My review, after all, stated that it contained a 'garbled' storyline but that it was equitable in terms of look and effects.

## SUGGESTION BOX

Dear FEAR,  
I like your magazine, it's worth the money, and I have some comments to make.

One: Regarding C Mitchell's letter (Issue 30), thrillers can be horrifying, albeit inadvertently on occasion, so their presence in FEAR is partly justified. However, the reasons behind reviewing *Night of the Fox* still elude me.

Two: Also regarding C Mitchell, I have too much respect for the genre to class Captain America as SF.

Three: A small suggestion. An interview with the extraordinary David Warner would go down a storm with me and others similarly afflicted.

Four: Another suggestion. Have you ever considered including a section on role-playing games? You could use it as a replacement for the much maligned music/computer games section...

Five: Graham Masterton appears to be one of those people like Vic Reeves; you either worship him fanatically or are driven to a suicidal frenzy by the mere mention of his name. I can't stand Vic Reeves, and similarly I am unimpressed by the slavering devotees who drool across the letters page about how much GM shits all over Stephen King. I like King — out of all the books I've read, only *The Shining* has ever scared me — but then, I've never read any of Masterton's stuff, so my dislike of him is totally unsubstantiated. I'm an open-minded person, if anyone can recommend some of his best work I'd be quite happy to read it. However, to the Masterton flock — we know you like him, please stop flooding the letters page with religious missives.

A few compliments before I go. Oliver Frey is an excellent artist, and beats the shit out of that man who sent in his rather more familiar Freddy picture way back in Issue Nine. Your features are always interesting and keenly intelligent, and the fiction, excepting a few careless choices, is of particular quality.

Thanks anyway for it all.

## Suzi Challenger

PS What has happened to our erstwhile correspondent CD Ward?

Well, CD is still with us but has been rather silent during the past six months. As to the other stuff, the music section is liked by a greater number of readers than those who dislike it, and you may have noticed some of the metal magazines have started to include sections on horror and fantasy — following FEAR's lead, of course. Role-playing? Only if a substantial number of readers write in with that request. Naughty, naughty, don't pooh-pooh a writer you've never read. And you've made Mr Frey a happy man for all of three minutes.

## HUMAN BARBECUE

Dear FEAR,  
I very much appreciate the supportive comments about my novels from R Clark, Don Elliot, C Mitchell and others. To some extent I have paid the price of writing exactly what I feel like writing — not only horror, but thrillers and historical sagas, too — and over the years this has caused some confusion in a book trade that likes to be able to categorise novels without having to think too hard about what might be in them.

This summer, however, will see the publication in Macdonald hardback of my neo-Nazi human-barbecue novel *The Hymn* and the sphere paperback edition of *The Walkers*. The third and last *Night Warriors* novel *Night Plague* will follow shortly.

My latest horror novels will be published by Mandarin, who have been extremely enthusiastic and supportive and have promised to make me visible at last! Look out for *Black Angel* and *Apparition*, in which Lovecraft's hideous Brown Jenkin makes an unwelcome reappearance. I am currently working on the Manitou sequel to end all Manitou sequels... Misquamacus returns!

Incidentally, *Corroborore* is to be republished this summer and *The Sweetman Curve* is still in print as a Severn House hardback. As far as movies are concerned, I am actively engaged in negotiations for *Mirror* and *Family Portrait* and there could be news of these very soon.

Thanks for your review of *Pig's Dinner*, John! I am writing a sequel specially for you...*Dog's Breakfast*.  
Graham Masterton

Thanks Graham, and we're pleased to see you well and truly back on the British circuit.



TO BITE IS TO BE

# VAMPIRE

From Bram Stoker to Anne Rice, From Hammer Films to The Lost Boys, and well before them, there is a condition of existence that has fascinated human kind since the Middle Ages: To be undead and to prey on the living. Vampirism is with us still — a dread, a dream. FEAR investigates the lure of those fangs that drip blood...



Death is an event none of us can avoid. Most of us don't think about it, until we reach the age where it takes on a physical possibility, some view it well before time with morbid curiosity — or dread; and yet, despite nature, all of us would dearly like to endure beyond its final shutdown. To vanquish death is the ultimate wish.

While dreamers like Mary Shelley fashioned fantasies of learned men creating life out of death and all in the service of science, simple people throughout the world chose to adopt the notion that some of us could escape and continue existence, living while naturally dead, forever.

Such dreams invite guilt: to defy God's order — whichever god rules in your area — must bring retribution: to live beyond your natural years is unnatural and sinful, to do so must entail the penalty of being a monster — the vampire!

But humankind has been used to monsters

since memories have been passed on in spoken or written word. And the undead are paramount amongst many.

## POWER IN DEATH

Vampires, though, are not merely undead — they bite back, so to speak: they are incarnate of the anger humans feel about being extinguished. Nice to be alive when all think you're dead, but don't feel guilty — overpowered disapproval by fighting back and what better way than to threaten the living who curse you for what they have not!

The thought of having vanquished death, and to show off your achievement by subjugating the living is paramount. It proves the individual's inherent distrust, often loathing, of his fellow human partners. While we go through life surrounded by friends, lovers, wives, children, casual encounters who all contribute to that feeling of belonging, when it comes to the crucial experiences of life — suffering, anguish, longings, yearnings, self fulfillment — we are alone. We try to communicate, we try to share, but deep down we know: you others are separate. When I'm



lying on my deathbed, facing death, you will sit there, and try, but not succeed, to know what I know of the horror of impending death and the pain it may entail. I will be alone.

This very anger, at best annoyance, with what we are destined to leave behind and how we personally do it, is at the root of the undead longevity of the vampire mythos: to be undead is a triumph, to prove it is unconscious revenge on the vicissitudes of living. A childish notion, but nasty little children we always are.

## **'Fangs in the jugular are the ultimate love bite.'**

Now add the fact that if you're dead, but not, and therefore a winner: what is the next step? A short one indeed! In this unusual state of ours, the previously unattainable can be achieved, in double or triple measure. Puny in life, we can be overpoweringly forceful in undeath: where mere steps are not enough we can fly; where no one listened to us a mere glow from our eyes will enthrall them; if we do not want to be seen, mirrors prove our nonexistence; even nature is at our behest: fog and wind, wolves, bats do as we say. And to cap it all we gorge ourselves on your bodies. Hah! Once we were prey to fear and mediocrity: now we are superhuman. Fancy a girl, want to tumble a boy — they are ours. Not even kings can withstand the power of our hypnotic suggestions!

Now the living are the food for our life beyond death, and by sucking their blood we can finally achieve that oneness with them which was impossible when we were alive.

### **MONSTER ALLURE**

For the living, vampires have the morbid fascination of the horrible: the cold grey flesh of the dead, moving, threatening and infinitely dangerous. Sleeping in coffins, in dank cellars, roving only at night, consorting with bats and wolves, sharp fangs and drinking blood are all the stuff of nightmares. A nightmare that will not go away. While our short lifespans see the generations come and go, the vampire's longevity turns the monster into an enduring strand, an evil presence, a background landscape of dark threat, forested with outgrowths of our suppressed animal, violent, sexual, perverse instincts.

The sado-masochistic connotations titillate. We know vampires have hypnotic powers to seduce us into being willing victims of their foul desires. The fangs in the jugular are the ultimate love bite, the blood sucking is a lascivious thrill for all involved — the monster, the victim, and the voyeur in us who imagines the scene. No wonder films have taken to vampires! But not only films: numerous murderers have channeled their psychopathic sexual frustrations and inadequacies into vampiric acts.

Add the mumbo jumbo of religion with its crucifixes and rituals to this concoction, the need for stakes through the heart, the severing of heads, and fire to kill the beast and you give the vampire truly satanic proportions: the stuff of myths.

A myth born of human deficiency, humans have kept it steadily undead. Because where there is doubt, even the unbelievable can be true. And the unbelievable, if it stems from deep desires, will be acceptable whether good or bad.

The vampire is here to stay...

Oliver Frey



# **FIRST BLOOD**

**All myths start from a kernel of truth, and in the case of the most famous vampire of them all you could argue from a pool of blood...**

**T**he man primarily responsible for all Dracula legends, Vlad Tepes (Dracula: 'son of the Devil') — or Vlad the Impaler — was in all probability not a chronic vampire. Born in 1431, he came to rule over those areas of Hungary that are now parts of Romania.

His father had already been made Prince of Wallachia by the Holy Roman Emperor

Sigmund, and entrusted with the military campaign against the Turks. Vlad Dracul eventually switched sides but betrayed his new masters in a boundary dispute which led to him being captured and taken to Adrianople where he regained his freedom at a price: his sons Dracula and Radu became hostages.

Once free, Dracul betrayed even his sons by again swearing allegiance to The Holy Roman Emperor. His son Dracula was furious and escaped his captors. Returning secretly to Wallachia, he waited until his father was murdered and then claimed the Principedom. There he ruled for six years of his life and spent 15 years in prison for political reasons — and for the foul crimes he was reported to have committed against humanity.





## MYTH AT STAKE

During his reign he killed thousands of Bulgarians, Germans, Romanians and Turks. His favoured method was impalement, which is more certainly barbaric than the stake in the heart technique used by vampire hunters. Large spikes were fixed into the forecourt of his castle. The victim was usually attached to a winch and lowered over the spike. Ropes were attached to the prisoner's ankles and the tip of spike was inserted into the anus. A skilled executioner would then be able to force the spike through the body without fatally spearing the vital organs. The victim would eventually die from blood loss, but the process could be hurried by pulling on the ankle ropes and driving the spike through the brain and skull!

Large numbers of bodies were often left to rot in this state and, like the Roman crucifixions, they acted as a warning to potential invaders of Wallachia.

Dracula was, and still is, regarded as a national hero and protector of the people by many Romanians, though his memory was suppressed during the Ceausescu years. It is, therefore, surprising that he was murdered in 1476 at the age of 46. Dracula was beheaded and secretly buried in a chapel at the monastery of Snagov. His remains have, apparently, since disappeared, giving rise to the vampire myth and leaving a mystery which scholars are still keen to solve.

Other historical figures who showed vampiric tendencies include Elizabeth Bathory, Gilles de Rais, Baron Roman von Sternburg, Aleister Crowley, Charles Manson, Commandant Hoess, Ed Gein, John George Haigh, and Fritz Haarmann all had a taste for blood in greater or lesser degrees.

More information about the real Dracula and his life can be obtained from *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces* by Radu Florescu and Raymond T McNally. It is published by Little Brown and Company.

John Gilbert

## WHY BLOOD?

The blood is literally the life: a fuel and lubricant that drives the human body, and that's why many a famous vampire just can't get enough.

Each adult human being carries five or six litres of the stuff which is composed of millions of cells which are transported around the body in straw coloured plasma. The cells make up 45% of whole blood and are composed of three types, red, white and platelets. These cells are mostly generated in the red bone marrow, which can be found at the ends of long bones in adults. The red blood cells are disc-shaped and coloured by haemoglobin. Cells live for an average 120 days, when they break down and are used to produce new cells. The white cells are double the size and act as one of the body's defences against infection, while the platelets clot the blood. The sticky fluid is pumped around the body by the heart muscles and arteries, but if these are underdeveloped the drastically uneven blood supply might lead to brain death.



# FROM LEGEND TO TYPE

John Gilbert traces the development of the fictional vampire

**T**he contemporary vampire in literature can be traced back to the 19th Century and *The Vampyre*, a short story written by Lord Byron, later to be expanded by his good friend Dr Polidori.

When the couple split up, Polidori tendered the story to the New Monthly Magazine where it was published under Byron's name in 1819 and, for some unknown reason, became an instant success. It concerns a young aristocrat called Lord Ruthven who drinks the blood of young women, and is a romantic fable which is far placed from the parasitic blood sucker of Hungarian folklore. The lineage was continued in 1847 by the Thomas Preskett Press which adapted the Polidori story as an 800-page penny dreadful serial and called it *Varney the Vampyre* — telling a similarly blood drenched tale of Sir Francis Varney.

Whether Bram Stoker, the writer and business manager of Victorian actor Sir Henry Irving, used these two sources as inspiration for his novel *Dracula* (1897) is open to debate because the author left little in the way of notes about the genesis of the book. It does, however, seem likely that Stoker had access to both tales, as well as the knowledge of Vlad Tepes.

By today's standards, Stoker's novel appears to be concocted in an unusual format: as a series of letters and journal extracts. But the Victorians were fond of such artifice, and many gothic novels were written in this way. *Dracula* begins with estate agent Johnathan Harker's trip to Transylvania where he meets the Count, helps him to find a property in Whitby, England, and is trapped in Dracula's castle where he almost loses his sanity...

Cut to the journal of Mina Murray, Harker's true love, who charts the strange arrival of a crewless ship at Whitby, the arrival of Dracula, the return of Johnathan, and the vampiric death of her cousin Lucy. We are also treated to the letters of Dr Seward who is concerned for the health of Renfield, a patient in his sanatorium and becomes Dracula's human thrall. The outbreak of vampirism in London, with sightings at Highgate and Shooter's Hill, is only combated when Seward calls upon the help of the Dutch, Dr Van Helsing. Together Harker and the doctor trace Dracula back to his castle in Transylvania where the count is finally beheaded.

Stoker continued to write gothic fiction, including *Lair of the White Worm* and *Jewel of the Seven Stars* — both of which are now



The man who let the bat out of the bag, Bram Stoker.

films — but only his short story *Dracula's Guest* again mentioned the Count, and even then did not treat the reader to a reappearance of the frock coated vampire.

The only other gothic vampire set-piece of the period is Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* which was published in 1872 and featured the beautiful Countess Mircall who reappears amongst the living more than a century after her death.

## MODERN VAMPIRES

Since then the vampire has popped up on only a few notable occasions within literary works. Stephen King wrote the classic neo-vampire novel *Salem's Lot* in 1975 and set in small-town America where a vampire living at the infamous Marsten House sucks the blood of the 'local worth'. Splatterpunk John Skipp and Craig Spector later transposed his claustrophobic tale to big-city New York as *Light at the End*, where a young man goes on the rampage after being given the bite, and Nancy Collins continued the theme, this time

with a sexy female vampire in her award-winning novel *Sunglasses After Dark*.

All these books, however, are supplanted to some degree by Anne Rice who, in 1976, released the first in a powerful vampire series, *Interview with the Vampire*. The first book is told, through means of a taped transcript, by Lewis, a relatively young vampire who was initiated by the central character in the remainder of the series, Lestat, back in the early 19th century. It is a haunting sojourn in the world of the undead, steeped in melancholia and spiced with eroticism.

The second novel, *The Vampire Lestat* (1985), is an autobiography by Lestat, who claims Lewis has labelled him with his accusations of seduction and debauchery. Lestat tells of his creation, his life in the Theatre of the Vampires, and the discovery of others who are like him in form if not lifestyle. It is the others who eventually force him to seek sanctuary in vampiric sleep until our present when he becomes a rock star. Adored by millions, and heedless of the vampire credo not to reveal details of the undead race to human beings, he eventually publishes his autobiography and is again forced underground when a death sentence is pronounced on him by others of his kind.

*Queen of the Damned* is the latest — though not the last — of the Rice vampire novels and develops the saga further in the third person, as the great queen of the vampires, Akasha, rises from her undead sleep to enslave the world of humans.

Always enthralling, Rice's Vampire novels are likely to hold the spotlight for sometime to come, with only the Brian Lumley Wamphyri books for company (read our *Necroscope* overview by Roger Kean). But, things are already on the move again on the American literary market, and as we move into a cycle of Dracula film adaptations and new vampire movies, it is likely that the Count and his ilk will feature in a whole slew of new bloodspattered novels.

## NEVER GIVE A SUCKER AN EVEN BREAK!

A few hints for survival, should you attract a vampire...

**M**ost of the methods mentioned in original folklore have been bastardised by the Hollywood vision of Dracula and his opponents, but the original, and most effective way to kill a vampire is to drive a stake through its body, pin it to the earth and then wait until first light at dawn. The vampire will then die an agonising death and, if the sun's rays don't do a thoroughly effective job, the beast should be decapitated and the body burned.

So much for the physical ways of driving out infestation. There are also a number of preventative measures which will protect you against a vampire, though these are largely symbolic:

Salt is often used as a chemically effective cleansing agent and will shrivel

el leaches and slugs.

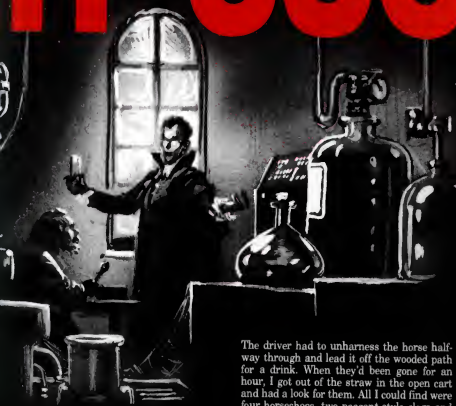
Garlic thins the blood, so is naturally abhorrent to any self respecting lord of the undead. Also, just as certain smells are repellent to cats and foxes, garlic is supposed to affect vampires in a similar way.

Running water signifies life, cleansing, holy baptism and purity. It is, therefore, impossible for a vampire to cross running water. Also, the vampire is a territorial creature and waterways were often used to mark country boundaries.

The crucifix is a symbol of faith, as is holy water. The physical object is useless without the belief to back it up.

The best guard is, however, not to invite the creature into your house in the first place.

# IT SUCKS!



**FEAR's Andy Oldfield takes a weekend break to interview Drac Nosferatu**

**T**he influence of Count Dracula is everywhere. From the air, the first thing you notice about Van Helsing International Airport is the way the smoke from the runway rush and tallow torches mingles with the Hammer House of Horror special effects swirling fog banks: Gothic smog no less.

No expense has been spared in this theme-park corner of Romania to recreate the atmosphere, which discerning consumers of the vampire myth and merchandise have come to expect. A shame really, because it means clearing Customs is a real bitch. Trying to understand the phony Austro-Hungarian accent of the pompous gits in uniform is bad enough, but the efficiency with which they conduct intimate body searches for contraband wooden stakes, garlic bulbs, and Christian paraphernalia is staggering; at least it left me staggering.

The taxi-ride from Van Helsing International to the University of Transylvania is only a matter of five miles or so. But the journey took nearly six hours.

The driver had to unharness the horse half-way through and lead it off the wooded path for a drink. When they'd been gone for an hour, I got out of the straw in the open cart and had a look for them. All I could find were four horseshoes, two peasant-style clogs and a lot of empty skin. I jogged the rest of the way, eager not to be late for my appointment at the university with Drac Nosferatu, professor of transfusion studies. Fortunately I got there in the nick of time — the sun had just set and bats were flitting about the campus.

## A HAZY BIRTH

The professor was waiting for me in his laboratory. The resemblance between him and Christopher Lee was astonishing, and the sprightly manner in which he vaulted out of his coffin to shake my hand belied his claim to have been undead for untold millennia.

'Fit? I'm not in too bad shape, I suppose,' he said. 'Let's put it down to a healthy diet...Drink?'

As he poured me a luxuriant Bloody Mary I sat down on the coffin edge and switched on my tape recorder.

'Hey, don't sit on the bed,' he said, handing me a tall glass of red liquid with a frothy ruby head to it. 'Use the chair...You like the drink? Fresh ingredients, that's the key. Have no truck with all this frozen, bottled and packaged stuff, that's my advice.'

What I wanted were the facts. Like how it all began. 'How does anything begin? Who really knows how we became what we are today?' he sighed wistfully. There's a vague memory about a rather good party, an awful lot of booze, filing of teeth and playing strip Trivial Pursuit with forfeits. But the details...bugged if I can remember them.'

Even if the most famous vampire in history is uncertain about his own origins, certain facts about his more recent behaviour are common knowledge. I put it to him straight.

Was he or was he not a soulless, undead corpse that rises from its coffin at night, sometimes assuming the form a vampire bat to seek out victims to drain of blood? 'Soulless! You want to see my record collection, it's full of James Brown, Diana Ross. It's chock full of soul.'

But the stuff with the bat impersonation? 'It's sort of an emblem really. Good isn't it? A logo full of subliminal resonances. I decided to adopt it as sort of a corporate identity symbol ages ago.'

And the blood? 'Hell, a vampire's gotta eat. Do I ask you to justify your diet? Course I don't, I can tolerate it. Even if you were a vegan, I could live with it — although if you were a vegan I might not be able to live off you, ha ha, I hate the taste of bleeding carrot crunchers. Diet's a personal thing, so why people get so parsimonious and uptight about it is beyond me.'

I wondered if it wasn't all a bit unhygienic. What about the risk of spreading disease? 'It's a problem, I admit: quite a few of the guys have gone down with weird viruses they've picked up off human beings.'

A natural misunderstanding for a vampire: I clarified my position. I was more concerned about the possibility of vampires spreading disease among humans. 'Bloody typical, that's humans for you. Utterly bloody selfish. Only ever think of yourselves. Look, you're pretty good at spreading diseases, between lifestyle and unhealthy practices. It's us vampires who are the innocent sufferers of your exotic infections, and believe me, these illnesses go on for a long time when you're as near as damn eternal.'

## DEATH AND ALL THAT

I was pleased he'd broached the subject of dying. After the zeal of the customs officials I wasn't looking forward to mentioning stakes and stuff. The legends are all true. We're repelled by crucifixes and garlic. Our bodies can be destroyed by being beheaded, burned, staked through the heart — not surprising really, the same's true for you as well.'

And exposure to sunlight? 'Yeah, that does us in as well. We break out in skin cancers like you do, just that ours develop quicker than yours...like in about three seconds flat. We all have to take vitamin D supplements.'

And the future? There's a lot of theorizing and psychologizing about vampirism. And I refute all of it, except maybe the speculation about vampirism as a cipher for sexuality. To that end, I've set up this research unit here in the centre for transfusion studies and am running intensive hands-on courses for any foxy young red-blooded chicks who care to enrol. Hey, just because you're undead doesn't mean you can't live a little! Undead, unreal and unhooked — that's my motto and I'm gonna live it to the full.'



# RESURRECTION OF THE UNDEAD

# FAN

**JB Macabre discovers  
a fan club with a  
difference...**

**Not only is Hollywood  
resurrecting vampires  
with upcoming movies  
Interview with a Vampire,  
The Vampire Lestat, Red  
Sleep and Children of the  
Night, but more and more  
US authors are also  
pulling stakes from the  
undead, as FEAR's Simon  
Bacall reports.**

**F**irst up is T. Lucien Wright's *The Hunt* (PB/Pinnacle Books/\$4.50). The story's title is the name of a small American town in upstate New York. When his parents are killed in a horrible car accident, seven year old Steven is sent to live with his uncle, Sheriff Judd Lucas, who has also suffered his own personal tragedy. Ten years earlier his wife, Cynthia and son Jeffrey disappeared under mysterious circumstances. It turns out that Cynthia is now one of the vampires terrorizing *The Hunt* alongside chief vampire Robert All, a trio of nasty vampire boys, and Martin, a vampire who has aged ever since drinking priest's blood.

Wright effectively paints a picture of a typical all American town turned upside down as dark fantasy becomes terrifying reality. The result is chilling, suspenseful and haunting.

Next is Lois Tilton's unusual vampire chiller *Vampire Winter* (PB/Pinnacle Books/\$4.50), set against the horrific aftermath of an all-out nuclear war. In a world where the cities have been destroyed, survivors are forced to seek refuge and food in the rural farmlands of America's Midwest, and among them is vampire Blaine Ketrledge who — like his human counterparts — is struggling to accept the reality of the ultimate nightmare.

This is a vampire who is as much a victim as the remaining humans. Among Kittredge's many problems are those people whose blood has been contaminated by radiation. And as the lingering radiation kills more and more

survivors, he's faced with the possible extinction of the human race. And once all the humans die, where does a vampire obtain his precious life blood?

## INTO DAYLIGHT

The world is once again intact for William Hill's *Dawn of The Vampire* (PB/Pinnacle Books/\$4.50). Well and living in Bristol, Tennessee, Hill's undead possess the ability to withstand sunlight. This causes a bitter debate among the vampiric school of thought. Head vampire Viktor Von Damme believes daylight will enable the undead to become a far greater species, and that by sleeping during daylight hours, they can be hunted by humans and destroyed. His opponent, blood-sucker Hoyt Wilhelm, claims the undead belong to the night. The debate ends with Von Damme slaughtering Wilhelm and his minions. Hill provides a memorable and enjoyable read, but it would have been better had the vampires kept their feeding to nighttime — somehow daylight causes the undead to lose their sense of menace and suspense.

From the American South, we journey to Andover, Illinois — the setting for Geoffrey Kane's *Curse of the Vampire* (PB/Diamond Books/\$3.95). And thanks to a special serum made from human marrow, the undead once again roam during daylight hours. The serum is developed by head vampire Dr Banaker who controls the Banaker Institute, which while masking as a medical establishment, actually acts as a 'processing plant' for the elixir which feeds him and his vampire colony. As a result, they can masquerade as humans: Banaker in the 'role' of Chief Medical Advisor, his vampire henchman as Police Chief.

Combining vampirism with science, *Curse of The Vampire* shows what happens when the undead attempt to coexist in 20th century society. In this case Aids and mankind's many other blood diseases are among the reasons why they have developed this processed and 'purified' serum.

Also included in the recent spate of vampire fiction is *The Vampire Memoirs* (PB/Zebra Books/\$4.95). Together with Traci Briery, Mara McCuniff tells of her 1600 years as a vampire. Born in a small British village during the 4th Century, Mara becomes a vampire in her early twenties. Well written and memorable, the story takes us up to her existence in present day LA.

No less enjoyable is Ron Dee's *Dusk* (PB, Dell Publishing/\$4.50) where vampires spread from a dusty Texas ghost town to the glittering wealth and lights of Dallas. Among those trying to stop them are US immigration officer Samantha Borden, Dallas cop Lt Golan and Samantha's friend, Mike, who is struggling to remain part of the human race after being bitten by a vampire hooker!

**T**he Count Dracula Fan Club officially opened its doors on January 1, 1990, in a penthouse overlooking Washington Square Park, New York — its founder and president, Dr Jeanne Youngson.

The club's purpose is to assist, entertain and inform, its intentions and aims ethical, social, moral and educational, and it considers all aspects of the vampire in fact and fiction. Dr Youngson, having thoroughly traced the history of Bram Stoker's model, Vlad Tepes, also sorts out those who believe they are members of the undead, or on their way to becoming one.

But why a Count Dracula Fan Club?

I took a trip to Romania in 1965. Our guide was very enthusiastic about Vlad. I was very familiar with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and somewhere along that trip something clicked. I thought that if I was interested in the literary *Dracula* and this terrific fellow Vlad 'The Impaler', then other people must be. I decided to start a *Dracula* Society. That very day I found a Vlad Tepes candle, and over the course of numerous trips I began to collect other souvenirs and articles.

Unfortunately the winds of change started to blow through Romania and the government tried to separate Vlad from Stoker's *Dracula*. 'Right after my first trip many souvenirs became hard to get, and there were no more *Dracula* tours. Everything to do with Bram Stoker and *Dracula* dried up and the country started to make Vlad Tepes into a hero. In the museum in Bucharest they have busts of Tepes in his honour.'

The authorities felt the vampire-linked attention was not worthy of a national hero — however bloody and barbaric Vlad had been.

## DRACULA USA

Whatever Romanians may feel, The Count Dracula Fan Club has a strong following in the US. It offers numerous benefits, including *News-Journals* and *Letterzines*. It sports a staggering fifteen divisions, amongst which a research division and library, the *Dracula* Press and *Unquiet Grave* Press, The *Vampire Bookshop* with booksearch facilities, a picture file and units like *The Monster Menage*, The Moldavian Market Place and a Special Interest Division.

And there's the museum: full of artifacts that pay homage to Vlad Tepes, Count *Dracula* and vampirism. 'Some of these things hop right up into my hands,' Dr Youngson revealed. 'I can spot movie stars around corners, and the same kind of thing

# GET TOGETHER!



**Dr Youngson surrounded by  
Twenty five years worth of  
Dracula artifacts.**

happens with these vampire and Dracula items. I walk into a store and these little vibrations start going off, not always but frequently.

I have a first edition, presentation copy of *Under the Sunset* autographed by Bram Stoker, interesting because it's dated 1881, a year before the book came out. I have a pair of opera glasses that were owned by Florence Stoker. A photo of Bram Stoker's urn.

On a lighter note, I have a DIY vampire hunter kit, picked up in Lancashire, a Dracula cookie jar, both Dracula stamps that have been issued, the world's smallest Dracula and the world's smallest coffin. *The Dark Shadows Cook Book*, which can fetch \$250.00. There's so much stuff here, it even boggles my mind. Members send us stuff as they come across it. One of our volunteers is trying to catalogue everything we have.

## TO BE UNDEAD!

Dr Youngson also collects interviews with numerous people who claim to be vampires, or who have had vampire encounters. 'I'm always astonished by the stories people tell me. To date, I've collected over forty interviews with people claiming to be vampires or wanting to be vampires. A few of those are in *Lust for Blood*, Norine Dresser's *American Vampire*, Vincent Hillyer's *Vampires* and Rosemary Guiley's *Vampires Among Us*.'

A lot of interviews turn out to be nothing more than hoaxes or games, like the girl from Scranton, Pennsylvania: 'She had nothing else to do and decided it would be fun to be a vampire. Or this woman from Lodi, California: she made up a boy friend vampire. She'd write herself notes and slip them under the door before she went out shopping so she would find them on her return home!'

Sometimes strange people are attracted: 'A man here in New York had this S&M-D&V club. He joined the Club, then started to contact our female members. It got so bad, we had to kick him out. About five months later, I discovered he'd joined our pen pal network, under a pseudonym, and was getting all these women's names, contacting them and using the same line. He started to send them disgusting things through the mail.'

'Sometimes you come across people who are too far involved in vampirism. On the other hand, we tell people right up front what we're about. They see what we offer, and there really is nothing about D&V, Satanism or S&M in any of our literature.'

The Club has members on both sides of the Atlantic. 'Germany, Italy, Turkey and Scandinavia are most responsive, but we have almost two hundred members in England. The British are just wild about vampires and Dracula!' Membership is just short of a thousand.

# GET INTO THE UNDEAD

**A listing of vampire information organisations, publications and fan clubs.**

## THE ANNE RICE'S VAMPIRE LESTAT FAN CLUB

PO Box 56277  
New Orleans, LA 70156-8277  
■ They publish a newsletter quarterly and offer a pen pal service.

## THE BRAM STOKER MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

Penthouse North, Suite H  
29 Washington Square West  
New York, NY 10011  
Dr Jenny Youngson, founder  
■ Lifetime membership is ten dollars.

## THE BRAM STOKER SOCIETY

c/o Albert Power  
227 Rochester Ave.  
Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin  
Ireland  
Leslie Shepard, founder

## THE BRITISH VAMPIRE SOCIETY

3 Westfield  
Chippingham, Wiltshire  
Salisbury, Wiltshire  
Allen J Gittens, honourable chairman  
■ They publish 'For the Blood is the Life', a quarterly journal.

## THE COLLINS/PORT RECORD, THE COLLINSWOOD

JOURNAL AND THE FRIENDS OF 'DARK SHADOWS'  
PO Box 313  
Moline, IL 61204  
Shirley Rizzuto, editor  
■ Publications for 'Dark Shadows' fans.

## THE COUNT DRACULA SOCIETY

Penthouse North, Suite H  
29 Washington Square West  
New York, NY 10011  
Dr Jenny Youngson, president  
■ See report this issue.

## COUNT DRACULA SOCIETY

334 West 54th Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90037  
Dr Donald A Reed, national president

## COUNT KEN FAN CLUB

18 Palmer St  
Salem, MA 01970  
Ken Gilbert, president  
■ Monthly newsletter

## THE DRACULA SOCIETY

26 Elliotts Street  
Woolwich, London  
England, SE18  
Bernard Davies, honourable chairman

■ Membership applications are approved by a board. They hold meetings, dinners, film screenings and other special events. Their periodical of commentaries, articles and reviews is 'Voice from the Vault'.

## THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF IRREPRODUCIBLE VAMPIRE & LYCANTHROPY RESEARCH

PO Box 542  
Highgate  
London, N6 6BG  
England  
Ray Sean Manchester, founder & president  
■ Membership is by invitation only. Publishes a quarterly newsletter, 'The Cross and the Stake'.

## THE MISS LUCY WESTERNA SOCIETY OF THE UNDEAD

125 Taylor Street  
Jackson, Tennessee 38301  
Lewis Sanders, founder & president  
■ Membership is ten dollars annually and publishes a newsletter three to four times a year.

## THE SOCIETY FOR THE ACQUISITION & PRESERVATION OF VAMPIRE LORE

Penthouse North, Suite M  
29 Washington Square West  
New York, NY 10011  
Fons B Miller, executive director  
■ This organization collects, catalogs and preserves factual data regarding the vampire throughout history. They welcome contributions of newspaper and magazine clippings. Please send your name and address with each page.

## THE VAMPIRE INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Box 328  
Brooklyn NY 11220-0328  
Eric Held, director  
■ This organization serves as an information clearing house. They also publish a newsletter six times a year, 'Vampire Information Exchange Newsletter'.

## THE VAMPIRE JOURNAL

PO Box 994  
Metairie, LA 70004  
Thomas Schellenberger, president  
■ Publishes journals and newsletters

## THE VAMPIRE PEN PAL NETWORK

Penthouse North  
29 Washington Square West  
New York, NY 10011  
Ann Margaret Hart, executive director

## VAMPIRE RESEARCH CENTER

PO Box 252  
Shoharad NY 11973  
Stephen Kaplan, director  
■ They collect data on vampire and act as an information service.

## THE VAMPIRE RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Penthouse North, Suite E  
29 Washington Square West  
New York, NY 10011  
Robert J Clark, executive director  
■ They issue a yearly listing of recommended books on vampire research. Copies are available without cost or obligation if you send your requests with a SASE to the above address.

## THE VAMPIRE RESEARCH SOCIETY

PO Box 542  
Highgate  
London N6 6BG  
England  
Ray Sean Manchester, founder & president  
■ Offers a revised and expanded edition of 'The Highgate Vampires' by Manchester. Send an international money order for £11 to The Vampire Research Center.

## VAMPIRE STUDIES

PO Box 151  
Borvik, IL 60402  
Martin V Riccardi, president  
■ Founded in 1977, this organization is not open to membership. They are interested in hearing about vampire fantasies and serve as a clearing house for information. Lectures. Their publication is the 'Journal of Vampirism'.



# MOVING VAMPIRES

**Van Gilbert, clutching his crucifix, ventures down into the film vault...**



Since the early 1900s and the release of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, film directors have been both fascinated and repulsed by the archetype of the vampire. The reasons for this polarity of views is often to do with creative concerns but, in 1921, it was purely commercial considerations that lead director FW Murnau to call the first ever vampire film *Nosferatu* — or *Lord of the Night*.

At that time, Stoker's book was popular but the rights were not negotiable — even in Germany where the film was eventually made. Murnau skirted around the problem

by creating his own terrifying vision of the vampire, played by Max Schreck, using several of Stoker's gothic set pieces but ending the undead creature's reign with sunlight.

Schreck's vampire contained not a stitch of internal romanticism, played as it was like an ugly leech and, although the vampiric act was portrayed sensually, it was not until the official 1931 version of *Dracula* that Bela Lugosi, a Hungarian actor by the name of Bela Ferenc Blasko, created the suave blood-sucker who has become the stereotype. The black and white movie is a beautifully crafted thriller which unfortunately loses its way in the fog towards the end. That did not, however, stop Lugosi from appearing in a series of vampire vehicles in which, for copyright reasons, he could only be called *The Vampire*, as well as spoofs with Abbot and Costello and, in Britain, *Mother Riley*.

Skimming quickly past *Dracula's Daughter* in which Otto Kruger took the role, the next *Dracula* was, of course, played by Christopher Lee in Hammer's 1958 remake of the Lugosi film. Also starring Peter Cushing and directed by Terence Fisher, this set the pattern for 15 years of Hammer *Draculas* in which the same team took the role. The most effective of these were *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* and *Dracula Prince of Darkness*; the least effective, and a tail-ender in all respects, was the ridiculously premised *Dracula AD 1972* which starred Lee but not Cushing.

From the moment Lee took on the role, *Dracula* and his vampire cronies became big business with the likes of Frank Langella, George Hamilton and Louis Jordan taking on the role. Even now, *Dracula* is again on the casting couch, and this time *Godfather* director Francis Ford Coppola will be taking the reins. Gary Oldman (*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*) and Winona Ryder (*Edward Scissorhands*) play the two lovers, Harker and Murray, while Anthony Hopkins makes his entrance as Van Helsing. Shooting starts this month, so it's gonna be a crucifix autumn for vampire lovers.



**Max Schreck, the first filmic fiend.**

**For those of you who need to know all the vampire movies ever made, we got JB Macabre to compile a chronological listing! Some are great, some not so great, and as he puts it: 'Mostly the ones I could remember'**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1921: NOSFERATU, Germany                       | WORLD OF VAMPIRES, Mexico                            |
| 1931: DRACULA, USA                             | UNCLE WAS A VAMPIRE, Italy                           |
| 1936: DRACULA'S DAUGHTER, USA                  | 1961: L'AMANTE DEL VAMPIRO, Italy                    |
| THE VAMPIRE BAT, USA                           | THE BLOOD DRINKERS, Philippines                      |
| 1942: DEAD MEN WALK, USA                       | AFKKA KKOTS, Korea                                   |
| 1943: SON OF DRACULA, USA                      | BLOOD & ROSES, USA                                   |
| THE RETURN OF THE VAMPIRES, USA                | 1962: LE STRAGE DEI VAMPIRI, Italy                   |
| 1944: HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, USA               | 1963: KISS OF THE VAMPIRE, USA                       |
| 1945: THE VAMPIRE'S GHOST, USA                 | 1964: DR TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS, UK               |
| HOUSE OF DRACULA, USA                          | MGA MANUGANG NI DRACULA, Philippines                 |
| 1948: ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN, USA | BLACK SABBATH, USA                                   |
| 1953: DRACULA ISTAMBULDA, Turkey               | THE LAST MAN ON EARTH, USA                           |
| 1965: LA FANTASMA DE LA OPERETA, Argentina     | 1966: DRACULA - PRINCE OF DARKNESS, UK               |
| 1966: PLAN NINE FROM OUTER SPACE, USA          | THE HAND OF NIGHT, UK                                |
| 1967: EL ATAUD DE VAMPIRO, Mexico              | 1966: BILLY THE KID VS DRACULA, USA                  |
| BLOOD OF DRACULA, USA                          | ORGY OF THE VAMPIRES, USA                            |
| THE VAMPIRE, USA                               | 1967: LAS MUJERES DE DRACULA, Mexico                 |
| 1968: THE HORROR OF DRACULA, UK                | DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES, USA                           |
| ANAK PONTIANAK, Malaysia                       | DR TERROR'S GALLERY OF HORRORS, USA                  |
| RETURN OF DRACULA, USA                         | 1968: DRACULA HAS RISEN FROM THE GRAVE, UK           |
| BLOOD OF THE VAMPIRE, UK                       | SANTO EN EL TESORO DE DRACULA, Mexico                |
| 1969: TEMPI DURI PER I VAMPIRI, Italy          | ISABELL: A DREAM, Italy                              |
| FIRST MAN INTO SPACE, UK                       | 1969: TALES OF BLOOD & TERROR, USA                   |
| 1969: BRIDES OF DRACULA, UK                    | DRACULITA, Philippines                               |
| LA MASCHERA DEL DEMONIO, Italy                 | MEN OF ACTION MEET THE WOMEN OF DRACULA, Philippines |
| LE MOURIR DE PLAISIR, France/Italy             | LOS MONSTRUOS DEL TERROR, Spain/Italy                |
|  | Germany  |
|  | ONE MORE TIME, UK                                    |
|  | BLOOD OF DRACULA'S CASTLE, USA                       |
|  | TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA, UK                       |
|  | BLOOD BEAST TERROR, UK                               |



**John Gilbert grills Dawn director Niall Johnson about shooting a feature length movie on video**



It's not impossible to make a low budget British movie, but most industry insiders will tell you it's damn hard. That sort of blunt turn off did not, however, stop Bristol-based training video producer Niall Johnson from developing the vampire film *Dawn* and employing his contacts to make a £10,000 project commercially viable.

As many an aspiring young film maker, Johnson began by creating shorts of his favourite TV shows — *Star Trek*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Batman* — but it wasn't until he got involved with theatre that the real action began. 'It was the nearest thing to doing film work, and it was always the dream to write and direct. I did a drama course at Bristol University, concentrated on the film side of it, and therefore made the jump to video as part of the practical course. Graduated from university, I now make money doing educational films, and spend time writing. Then, when I've got a bit of cash, I put it into movies like *Dawn* as a way of producing low budget pictures that otherwise wouldn't get made, because unknowns or first-timers just out from film school are working on them. There's no way they'd get access to making a movie unless one of us gets off our backsides and says: let's put the money in and do it.'

**MAKING DO**

It started out very much as a corner cutting exercise. There's no access to the companies that make films unless you've gone to film school. If you go *there* you end up doing a 10

# VIDEO IN THE BLOOD



1970: BEISS MICH, LIEBLING, West Germany  
EVERY HOME SHOULD HAVE ONE, UK  
SCARS OF DRACULA, UK  
EL CONDE DRACULA, Spain  
INCENSE FOR THE DAMNED, UK  
A TRIP WITH DRACULA, USA  
COUNT YORGIA, VAMPIRE USA  
DIE ERBIN DES DRACULA, Spain/Germany  
JONATHAN, West Germany  
VAMPIRE CUADRECUC, Spain  
HOUSE OF DARK SHADOWS, USA  
VAMPIRE LOVERS, UK  
VAMPIRE DOLL, Japan/Germany/Italy

1971: LIST OF DRACULA, UK  
COUNT EROTICA, USA  
BLOOD THIRST, Philippines  
TO LOVE A VAMPIRE, UK  
BLOOD OF FRANKENSTEIN, USA  
GEBISSEN WIRD NUR NACHTS  
HAPPENING DER VAMPIRE, Germany  
CHI O SUV ME, Japan  
DRACULA IM SCHLOSS DES SCHRECKENS, Germany/Italy  
COUNTESS DRACULA, UK  
PA JAXY EFTER DRACULA, Sweden  
IN BRANCH OF DRACULA, USA  
THE VELVET VAMPIRE, USA  
VAMPIRE MEN OF THE LOST PLANET, USA  
VAMPIRE HAPPENING, Germany  
NIGHT OF DARK SHADOWS, USA  
LET'S SCARE JESSICA TO DEATH, USA

1972: GO FOR A TAKE, UK  
HORROR RITUAL, USA  
THE DEATH MASTER, USA  
TWINS OF EVIL, UK  
DRACULA AD 1972, UK  
CAPTAIN KHONOS, VAMPIRE HUNTER, UK  
LA DIVISION DE LOS MERTOS, Mexico  
LE MESSE NERE DELLA CONTESSA DRACULA, Italy  
LA HJIA DE DRACULA, Spain  
DRACULA CONTRA EL FRANKENSTEIN, Spain  
EL GRAN AMOR DEL CONDE DRACULA, Spain

SANTO Y BLUE DEMON CONTRA, DRACULA AND THE WOLF MAN, Mexico  
LA SAGA DE LOS DRACULAS, Spain  
BLACULA, USA  
WEREWOLF VS THE VAMPIRE WOMAN, West Germany/Spain  
VAMPIRE CIRCUS, UK  
NIGHT STALKER, USA

1973: THE BAT PEOPLE, USA  
SATANIC RITES OF DRACULA, UK  
VAULT OF HORROR, UK  
SCREAM BLACULA SCREAM, USA  
SON OF DRACULA, UK  
DRACULA, USA  
EL RETORNO DE LA DREQUESSA DRACULA, Spain  
RENDEZOUS, USA  
VEIL OF BLOOD, Swiss

1974: COUNT DRACULA: THE TRUE STORY, Canada  
VAMPIRA, UK  
LEGEND OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN VAMPIRES, UK/Hong Kong  
ANDY WARHOL'S DRACULA, USA  
TENDRE DRACULA, OU LES CONFESSIONS D'UN  
BUVEUR DE SANG, Germany  
DRACULA GOES TO R2P, Philippines  
GRAVE OF THE VAMPIRE, USA  
DRACULA'S BLOOD, Spain

1975: DEAPULA, USA  
EVIL OF DRACULA, Japan  
VAMPIRES - DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS, USA

1976: DRACULA, PERE ET FILS, France  
TRAIN RIDE TO HOLLYWOOD, USA  
MARTIN, USA

1977: DRACULA'S DOG UK

1978: BLOOD ON DRACULA'S CASTLE: USA  
NOCTURNA, USA

1979: WORLD OF DRACULA, USA  
VAMPIRE HOOKERS, USA  
SALEM'S LOT, USA

NOSEKATU: THE VAMPIRE, Germany  
NIGHTWING, USA  
LOVE AT FIRST BITE, USA  
DRACULA, USA

1980: DRACULA'S LAST RITES, USA

1981: TWO FACES OF EVIL, UK

1985: VAMPIRES N HAVANA, Cuba  
ONCE BITTEN, USA  
FROTH NIGHT, USA

1986: VAMP, USA

1987: RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT, USA  
THE MONSTER SQUAD, USA  
THE LOST BOYS, USA  
NEAR DARK, USA

1988: VAMPIRE'S KISS, USA  
LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM, UK

1989: FRIGHT NIGHT II, USA  
TO DIE FOR, USA  
ROCKULA, USA  
NIGHTLIFE, USA

1990: VAMPIRE, USA  
SUNDOWN, USA

1991: CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT, USA  
SUBSPECIES, USA

FUTURE FILMS:  
VAMPIRES AND OTHER STEREOTYPES  
THIRST  
THE MONSTER TOUR  
STEPHEN KING'S SLEEPWALKERS  
FROM DUSK TILL DAWN  
BLOOD RELATIVES  
THE LOST BOYS II  
DRACULA: THE UNTOLD STORY

Enough?



minute piece that stretches your technical experience and proper lighting skill, but doesn't test your chances of forming a story that has to last 80 minutes.

'So, the project had to be a calling card introduction to myself for the industry. It had to be full-length with production values to prove it was a proper feature. But I wanted to make something that could actually survive in itself. I took a long time hunting out a story and talking to people I knew through my job. It wasn't the case of coming totally from nowhere with no contacts. I already knew people who could supply me with video equipment and edit suites, to whom I could chat about using their stuff for nothing.

'One of the reasons it's been made on video is that I couldn't make enough film contacts. I knew no-one on props and make-up effects, so I had to establish those contacts. I knew people from the university film school and a guy I'd done training videos with: he'd produced managed some things and knew people who'd love to be involved.

### **'I wanted to make something that could actually survive in itself.'**

'The camera, assistant camera and sound men are all people I'd never known before. I met them two weeks before the rehearsals and it could have gone bad: I might not have got on with them, not have shared the same vision. But it worked out.

'As to actors and actresses, John Rowlands, who put the package together, knew two actors and it followed on from there. The only person I knew was my brother who did the music, plays the vampire hunter and is doing a comic book adaptation.

'The script was being written as I was recruiting people. When I realised in August 1989 that everyone would be free for a given month, it was obvious when it had to be shot. I contacted the facility houses who said, 'Yeah, we'll give you shooting equipment but it has to be July. So, the script had to be written to a deadline and I think that's where I'm most dissatisfied with the making process: I had to write it in a month.

### **OPPORTUNITY COSTS**

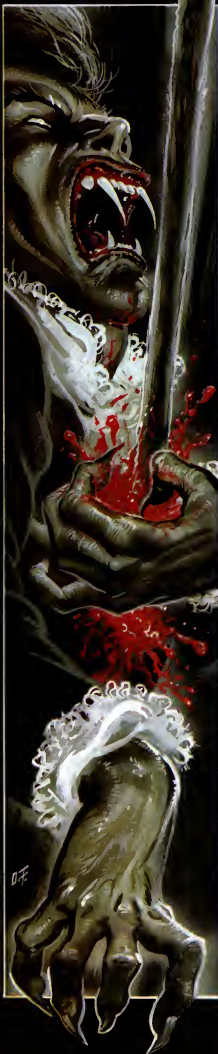
'I put up £4,000 and it ended up costing me about £10,000, and that included hiring the odd cinema for a showing; so the actual production cost about £8,000. But there was free equipment, free editing facilities, people worked on it cheap. If you add all that up the film had an actual budget of £40,000.'

Niall wants to put a reasonably priced feature together for his next project: *The Fallen*, about the devil and his fall from grace seems to be the most likely. If, however, money is not forthcoming he'll again do the bankrolling. 'I'll carry on making my training films, where my dosh comes from, and as soon as I can I'm going to stop, spend time writing and go ahead with it.'

Any room for a walk-on?

If you wish to see what all the fuss is about and win a copy of *Dawn*, turn to page 66. The movie is also scheduled to be shown at this year's British Fantasy Convention.

**26 August 1991 FEAR**



**Rosemary Ellen Guiley's just published *Vampires Among Us* aims to chart the reality of vampires in our midst. FEAR quizzed her on her motives...**

**V**ampires have fascinated me since I was a teenager, as I've found the case to be with most people. What surprised me was the amount of people actually involved in vampiredom and vampirism. Not just people who drink blood and call themselves vampires. What I'm talking about are the ones who truly believe they've undergone in their inner core some kind of physical and/or psychological transformation that makes them partially or wholly vampire. I was astonished.

'Many people experience an intense identification with the vampire, some want to be vampires, or want vampires to exist somewhere in the world. When people project these intense feelings out into our physical plane, I believe they are sometimes capable of manifesting themselves. So, the vampire does become a reality, a tangible entity.'

### **'I've had some strange experiences, though nothing as dramatic as a Steven Spielberg movie.'**

Rosemary Ellen Guiley is a journalist, but to write *Vampires Among Us* she had to adjust her methods: 'A true journalist removes him or herself from the centre of a project. But to write a good book you can't do that completely, or it has no voice. I've tried to view reality, the world, from my subjects' eyes. Even though I have to make conclusions, analyse and draw comparisons, I try to leave their views as intact as possible, so it's not me talking about these matters, but other people talking through me.'

### **MAKING CONTACT**

Research into the occult can bring one into contact with negative energies, and Rosemary had a few instances on this project.

'Over the years I've had some strange experiences, though nothing as dramatic as a Steven Spielberg movie. Still, every now and then something breaks through. I talked to a fellow named Bob, who felt he had experienced vampire attacks, and with our presence we seemed to psychokinetically affect the heating system in the building we were in. There were some people I encountered who left me feeling rather 'drained'. Yet, it

# DANCING WITH VAMPIRES



**Alternate realities for**  
**Rosemary Ellen Guiley.**

was nothing that had any lingering effects.

The closest I came to feeling I was going to experience more than I wanted to came the night I spent with the vampires in London in my flat. That was only because for them their invisible companion was very real — maybe because their emotions became very intense. We were getting pretty 'into it' and it was the early hours of the morning, when things can manifest themselves. To a certain extent, they wanted the unseen vampire to be present, and they started seeing him in the room and saying, 'Look there he is! Can't you see him?' I didn't want to see him, because I didn't want that to intrude upon me. Sometimes you can become overwhelmed by the energies in the place. For a very short while I felt vulnerable, but the unseen vampires stayed in their world and I stayed in

mine. The real vampires departed that evening in good spirits and I went on to write my book.'

## FANG APPEAL

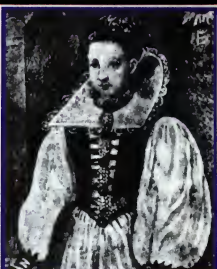
Guiley argues that the appeal of the fictional vampire is very strong, and that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* figure has been adapted and changed by that part of the public who would like the fictional phenomenon to be real. These people make that reality by taking that world and infusing their psychic energy into it. This in turn, mutates the vampire. This is why we have increasingly human-like versions. We have fops in elegant clothes with lots of money who are immune to every disease, whose wounds heal quick. These are attributes humans want to have for themselves. The vampire has the ability to transcend our ordinariness.'

Her aim is to educate people about how our perception of what vampires really are have been distorted by fiction and film, so that little remains of their eastern European origins. And yet some individuals do feel they have experienced or encountered vampirism, and she would like to help them become more open to these experiences that are not ordinary.

'I want to get people to consider alternate realities. How we affect our environment through our thoughts, that it's possible for things unseen/unknown to exist, and that it doesn't mean that someone who experiences that world is crazy. It's okay for normal people to have experiences beyond the ordinary: it's a window into an alternate reality.' In the end though, she'd like to have readers draw their own conclusions.

Rosemary Ellen Guiley is already planning a follow-up book which will devote more attention to the development of those images in both fiction and folklore.

**JB Macabre**



## LADY OF DARKNESS

The most infamous historical lady vampire is the Countess Elizabeth Bathory, a rich and beautiful Hungarian who lived at Castle Csejthe in their Nyitra country of north-west Hungary.

Her family had always been rumoured to traffic in the black arts, but it was not until December of 1610 that her evil deeds were discovered by her own cousin Count Thurzo, who was the governor of the province.

While her husband Ferencz Madasdu was away at war, the Countess became enamoured with her manservant, who taught her the rudiments of witchcraft. She started to cast very simple spells and kill black cockerels. But, one day, a maid pulled her hair too tightly and Elizabeth broke her nose. The blood spilled over the countess' skin which seemed to rejuvenate. Her maid became the first of many to have their blood used in Elizabeth's secret baths. Eventually, the Blood Countess was found out and, as punishment, walked up within her castle where she endured until 1614.

It is likely that Elizabeth Bathory was the role model for Sheridan Le Fanu's terrifying, gothic, tale of female vampirism *Carmilla*, in which a young man falls almost fatally in love with a beautiful guest at his father's castle. It is also without doubt that many a horror film has been spawned from the Countess' bloody misdeeds. The most famous of these is *Countess Dracula*, a Hammer production which stars actress and novelist Ingrid Pitt as Elizabeth Bathory. Although the storyline is similar to the legend, this movie trades heavily on sex appeal, using the amply proportioned Pitt and her unfortunate slaves to great effect.

## GET YOUR FANGS INTO FACTS

A suggested non-fiction bibliography

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# STAKES 'N' STAPLES

## Vampires in comics

The lure of producing sexy, stake-slaming strips has proved too strong for many comic publishers to resist, as Warren Lapworth reveals.

**L**ike many horror comics (and indeed movies), some right up to the present day, early vampire titles traced their roots and inspiration from the Hammer movies, and New York's Warren Publishing were particular exponents. In addition to generic horror comic magazines such as

*Berie* and *Creepy*, they produced the long-lived *Vampirella* — no prizes for guessing what the subject matter was — beginning in September 1969.

The figurehead and mascot of Warren Publishing, *Vampirella* was an alien — the last of the vampyr race from the planet Drakulon. In a remarkable piece of foresight by the magazine's creators, gases destroyed Drakulon's equivalent of our ozone layer, leaving it open to harmful rays from her system's suns. But as luck would have it, a space exploration team from Earth landed just in time for her to smuggle aboard and be taken to our world.

Vampyrs are orderly, peace-loving creatures but to live had to drink from Drakulon's streams. A similar liquid flows on Earth — through mammals' veins; blood. She wasn't forced to survive as a vampire for long because a scientist created a serum that could quench her thirst. But its effects only last 24 hours and *Vampirella* often lacks the facilities and ingredients for a new batch...

*Vampirella*'s adventures, madly by veteran comics scribe Archie Goodwin, took her all over the globe and involved many mystical and monstrous enemies from Chaos. The excellent mono artwork was atmospherically shaded in watercolor, and women with perfectly formed breasts were splashed around as much as possible, *Vampirella* herself always on the brink of bursting out of her skimpy leather outfit. Interesting, and worth tracking down a few issues.

Independent comic producers have often taken a stab at blood-sucking tales, for one-shot or limited series: Dell's decrepit movie adaptation, Innovation's *The Vampire Lestat*, Eternity's four-part *Vampyres* and *Dracula* series, Now's interpretation of the *Fright Night* movies, Aircel's overtly sexual *Vampire's Kiss*...



### 22ND CENTURY VAMP

The only on-going indie vampire comic book, and indeed the only vampire series of recent years, is Apple Comics' *Blood of Dracula*. As the title states, the Lord of the Vampires is given centre stage — in all three of the comic's regular strips.

Although the balance and profile shifted over the issues, the leading strip is set in the 1850s in Bukovina, the village overlooked by Apple's vampire castle, and is simply called *Count Dracula*. Bukovina is unofficially ruled by Herr Burkholdt, who begins a personal war against Dracula when he sucks the life out of his daughter.

The second and third *Blood of Dracula* strips are more adventurous. *Death Dreams of Dracula* switches between times and places nearly every issue, as it exists in the plane between life and death, where Quincey and Harker left Dracula at the end of the Bram Stoker novel. The half real, half dream *Dracula* allows diverse and usual stories, away from the usual myths. *Dracula 2199* is set in that year, where a reawakened Dracula is up against robots and gadgets controlled by the scientists that run the world.

Of the big two, DC has generally avoided vampirism, and indeed all forms of horror, like the proverbial plague. Marvel, on the other hand, are a completely different matter, and produced many horror comics from the early to mid 70s. The Lord of the Vampires was very popular for them, appearing in *Dracula Lives!* and *Dracula Giant Size* but achieving most success with *Tomb of Dracula*, which ran to an impressive 70 issues, between 1972 and 1979.

Dracula has guest-starred in several monster/horror comics (his appearance in *Vampire Tales* was hardly a revelation) and in a recent issue of *Marvel Comics Presents* teamed up with Nick Fury (and his Howling



Commandos) to defeat Nazis in a World War II story.

### THE LIVING VAMPIRE

Just as Marvel produced a stylised Devil character, Mephisto, they created a super-villain vampire, Morbius, whose first stories appeared in *Adventure Into Fear*. Morbius was once a scientist but discovered he had a rare and deadly blood defect. He used his skills to save himself, but unwittingly the cure transformed him into Morbius, the Living Vampire, complete with natty bat-winged costume, white complexion and irritating turned-up nose.

Morbius has guest-starred in many comics, including the infamous *Amazing Spider-Man* six arms saga (sic), currently being reprinted in *Marvel Tales*. Vampires have had a high profile in the third series of *Doctor Strange*, and Morbius, finally free of his blood thirst, helped the mighty sorcerer aid his brother, who cheated death by becoming a vampire.

Other than reprints of Marvel US *Dracula* comics, the UK produced *House Of Hammer*, which included several *Dracula* stories and introduced nemesis of the undead, Captain Kronos, Vampire Hunter. But my favourite British horror comic — and indeed, one of my favoured comic memories of youth — was IPC's *Scream*. Among its many and varied strips was *The Dracula File*, where the Count comes to the UK.

The stalker-slasher story, police and detectives forever thwarted, was grimly and broodily illustrated, and *The File* stands as one of the best modern treatments of the vampire legend. However, there are sure to be many successors: just like the mythical creatures themselves, vampire comics may lie in state for months on end but will never die. You can stake your life on it.

# BRIAN LUMLEY:

**Vampires are undead and well in Devon. FEAR despatched John Gilbert (including garlic and stake) for an interview with the vampire chronicler extraordinaire...**

**T**he lid opens, slowly. A slender bone-pale hand, too spindly to support more than a shadow, clutches the silky oaken side of the coffin, and an awakening hiss heralds horror in its most primal form.

This is the moment we know so well from film and literature, but few authors or scriptwriters have ever taken the story back in time, to a point beyond the creation of one vampire to the genesis of the undead. Brian Lumley, author of the acclaimed *Necroscope* series of books has created a reason for their being: one which has made him as a bestseller in the States and is rapidly gaining him fame in Britain. The way I saw the Wamphyri was that vampirism had started on a parallel world. By means of a gate, certain of them had come through to Earth and started vampirism — this could be 2,000, 3,000, years ago.

On the other side they were, are, all powerful. They come from a world which is split by the Barrier Mountains: on one side is Starside and on the other Sunside. When the sun goes down, the vampires come across the mountains. They can't during sun-up because it would have the same effect our sun has on them — a chemical effect. The fact is that some people, albinos, for example, have a hard time in sunlight. But, there is that in the vampire make-up which deepens that: they will literally evaporate. Their fats steam away, they become less coherent, they fall to pieces, they turn black, they char. Anybody who doubts that sort of effect only has to hold a magnifying glass over a piece of paper in the sunlight and see what happens. Well, that effect in the Wamphyri is magnified.

In the parallel world, vampires are lords with a feudal instinct for territory and a need for blood. A human being is to a vampire as a coconut to a South Sea islander, useful in many ways: on their world, they refashion people to provide their fliers, refashion men



**'We all know what we would do, how we would control ourselves if we were vampires.'**

# THE SOURCE

for their warriors; in their eyes on the Starside, the stairways are made of bone or cartilage. The awnings which carry their silks are flayed skin, vampirised first to give it strength.

There, a day is a week in our terms: the night lasts three days. But daytime lasts the equivalent of four of our days. It restricts the Wamphyri's moves: they can't go into Sunsides for four of our days at a stretch, which gives the Sunsiders humans plenty of time to move on. They aren't stay in one spot too long, lest the vampires find them too easily come nightfall. That's why they became Travellers.

The vampires, used to these long nights in which they were masters, have now come to a

They're also fascinated with vampire power and, often secretly hanker for the strength and longevity inherent in these beasts, but Brian suggests these are fools' dreams. 'Being human, we all know what we would do, how we would control ourselves if we were vampires. We know we'd be hugely attractive, well, metamorphic. So if we were born not exactly handsome we know we'd become so because we could mould our features, appear to be any way we would want. We know we'd become very rich and our sphere of influence would advance. And there's the sexual aspect: what man doesn't wish to appeal to women, to enthrall and possess them? Well, that's part of the fascination of the vampire.'

series of graphic novels is in development, and that the Wamphyri cycle will continue in a new series of books which gravitates more towards the vampires' world. 'Malibu, an American outfit, have worked out a contract with Tor books: they intend to break the novels down into four or six monthly comics and then, at the end of each series, bind them up into the large graphic novels of the books.'

As for the *Vampires' World* series, 'it seemed a shame to have created a parallel world which was fairly distinct, whose geography and time-scale, whose characters, inhabitants, were so clear in my mind, for a series of passages in *The Source*, and to put an end to the series in *Deadspawn* when I had an entire world to play with, where vampirism is the norm, where subjugation by vampires is part of life. In *Vampires' World* I wanted to carry the theme on. But, I needed a set of people who were able to cope with the situation of living with vampires.'

The Harry Keogh character is dealt with in the *Necroscope* books, but between *The Source* and *Deadspawn* there is a blank spot, left there specifically so other plot threads could be developed from it. There's a gap in Harry Keogh's life: he fathers twins upon a Traveller woman from Sunsides, except that because of the change taking place in him, it won't benefit her to let anyone know who the father of these boys is.

The two sons of Harry Keogh are brought up as Travellers, one of whom has all of Harry's instincts, his natural intelligence, but without the benefit of the schooling. How can you become an intuitive mathematician if you don't know what maths is? That's something he has to learn: so one son has the talent to become another Harry Keogh, but doesn't know how. The other one — they play 'Human and Wamphyri' like we play 'Cowboys and Indians' — all he wants to be is an 'Indian'. The good facet, the Harry facet, falls foul of the vampires. He's thrown through the dimensional portal into our world, where all of a sudden maths and science are available to him. He can learn the things that will connect all the Harry facets, all the genes. Like father like son. Will he become the next *Necroscope*? Will he go back and clear out the world of the vampires? Will Starside ever be safe again? Will it be safe for the Wamphyri to go and walk out in the moonlight again?

A dry chuckle. 'As we say in this world: you'll be afraid to turn the page.'

Grafton (UK) and Tor (US) publish the *Necroscope* novels and the continuing Titus Crow, psychic detective, books.

Headline have already released the *Hero of Dreams* novels and are now launching the *Prime Land* series. All of Brian Lumley's backlist books will eventually be available in the UK.

## 'A human being is to a vampire as a coconut to a South Sea islander, useful in many ways.'

world where the nights are so much shorter. Also, there are far more human beings than there were Travellers, and we're years more advanced. We have atomic weapons, shotguns, we can use silver; sciences the Travellers lost after a holocaust in their world. So the vampire is very much more susceptible to death in this world.'

## REASONS FOR BEING UNDEAD

The major difference between Brian's creatures and those described by the likes of Stoker is in the milieu. They're still the vampire creature we know and recognise, except we now know more about them. 'I don't see my vampires as being different from the ones we all know. I see mine as having a reason for being which they didn't have before. We've always known what they do, but there's been no reason for these damn things. And, one thing that's always puzzled me: we've known there are quite a few of these guys, so why hasn't the plague proliferated, spread abroad? I've tried to supply an answer: because anonymity guarantees longevity, they can't become too apparent. Unlike on Starside, here on Earth people are gonna come looking for them during the daylight.'

Though Harry Keogh the Necroscopic speaker with the dead, is the pivotal character in the series, readers are equally drawn to Brian's blood guzzlers. This may be partly the same as viewers' enamourment with Freddy Krueger but, with the Wamphyri the reason goes much deeper. Readers seem to very much enjoy the Wamphyri history, to see how these characters developed.

'We all wish we had these powers. We all know what we would do and what we would be. Alas, we're wrong. That's us thinking as human beings. But once we become a vampire, he's the one that takes over.'

'My Wamphyri are two creatures: the human and the vampire within him. While the human thinks it's guiding its own destiny, the vampire is really guiding its destiny and causing it to do the things it wants. The horror of it is that we aren't in control.'

## THE OLD BITES DEEP

Although publishers are always looking for new types of horror, it tends to be books with an anchor in old traditions that do well. The vampire and werewolf syndromes are still the most prevalent themes for horror writers, and Brian has a reason for the continued success of what many mistakenly see as worn out themes. It's a reason that goes beyond stereotype and enters the dimensions of archetype and atavistic resurgence.

Mankind has already worked out its greatest fears. We already know the things which frighten us. We are frightened of disease: like vampirism or lycanthropy. These are serious, hurting, diseases. And we also hate having something in us which has a grip on us. We can't bear to think somebody else is in control.

'We like something of the old tradition in our books because they are the basic fears we've all held ever since the cave man woke up in the morning and gave a sigh of relief that nothing had ventured into his cave the night before.'

*Deadspawn* finishes the story of Harry Keogh, but fans will be pleased to hear that a



# SPEAKING OF THE DEAD...

Since Bram Stoker, vampires have held a sway over the minds of horror authors, yet they have rarely been as well exposed to the historian's eye in as much detail as in Brian Lumley's *Necroscope* series. Its definitive anthology of vampirism owes much to the influence of Cthulhu, but Roger Kean argues that it goes far beyond Lovecraft's range

**B**rian Lumley is a solidly-built Yorkshireman with a down-to-earth, no-nonsense attitude that contrasts surprisingly with the whimsy popularly associated with the telling of fairy-tales. He's also a very successful writer. This, his physique and manner and his happily married comfortable existence in Devon are a very different set of circumstances from those enjoyed by his inspiration — Howard Phillips Lovecraft.

At his death from cancer in 1937, HP Lovecraft was almost penniless, chronically alone (from choice) and after a sickly adolescence, had preferred to live the life of a semi-invalid. Lovecraft, too — although I fear to tread on his cult — was far from being a good writer, which is why his fortunes were poor; the cult only began later. Lumley, on the other hand, can look back on a large body of work which has consistently improved with every book.

Yet there are comparisons to be made,

which go deeper than Titus Crow on the scent of the insane, brooding forces of the Cthulhu Mythos. As Colin Wilson identified in his excellent *The Strength to Dream* (1962), HP Lovecraft's underlying theme was the undermining of materialism; he was a man who never came to terms with life and hated the prevailing confidence in progress and science as the answer to the world's ills. In most of his later stories horrors from the far, far past surface to threaten mankind. Science and reason fail at every turn; in the end it is usually some form of arcana that defeats the demon.

But Lovecraft quickly recognised that horror stories set in a historic context wouldn't frighten a modern reader, so he set them in the present day — although inevitably in some remote location. So arose the Cthulhu mythology, an entire world-set to justify the extraordinary events he created.

Rather than in the Titus Crow books it is in his five-book *Necroscope* series that Lumley probably finds his closest comparison with Lovecraft. There's an original mythos — the Wamphyri, who once existed in a parallel universe and came to Earth many thousands of years ago, a modern setting and a hero who succeeds through the supernatural where pure science fails. Lovecraft was also obsessed with incubi, the notion that a monster can take over a human's body, ejecting their spirit in the process, and few horror fiends have been such successful bailiffs as vampires.

It is perhaps fittingly ironic that the man whose powerful imagination created the Cthulhu mythology also lacked the organisational imagination to develop it satisfactorily. Its strength over dreamers since is evidenced by the numbers of writers who have reused, modified and adapted it, including Lumley himself and luminaries such as Colin Wilson. But for me, Lumley's Wamphyri are far more satisfying, and the *Necroscope* series much more cohesive.

## SILVER BULLETS AND GARLIC

On first reading *Necroscope*, Lumley's skill quickly becomes apparent, as he plays with the traditional paraphernalia of vampirism from virtually every creature or filmed source. At once we have a creature who lives with, and abides by, the rules of Bram Stoker and Freddie Francis. Many Hammer Horror Dracula films kick off with a hooker sequence of some poor shreddie tripping up and spilling blood on an anonymous patch of mud that just happens to be the dread one's last resting place, thus resurrecting the Prince of Darkness for another bite. So it's the case in *Necroscope*, and in later books Lumley plays

variations on the theme as busily as Beethoven in a symphony; but for the first few chapters we could be in James Bond land, deep in the secret bunker of a KGB research centre.

It's these strands of the ancient, the medieval and the modern spy thriller that give the *Necroscope* series their eclectic attraction. But as with Lovecraft, science is not the answer — long-dead mathematician Möbius proves much more use than Q and 007 could ever be. In the end the spy thriller aspect is only a coathanger from which Lumley depends his intricate history of a race of deadly super-beings.

By Book Three, *The Source*, and reminiscent of Colin Wilson's weird Cthulhu-style novels, he has pulled off a coup that is unique in such a long serial, that of whisking the reader far away from what has been perceived, up until this point, as the central action and into the past — or parallel universe — to narrate the Wamphyri history. In so doing, the nature of the creatures is enlarged and the very form of literary vampires tied together to explain all the 'rules' of vampirism. It's a clever trick.

## WORD GAMES

Clever though the wamphyric mythos is — and where Lumley scores hands over Lovecraft — the storytelling is vital. Throughout the series intricate plotting makes for a rattling good yarn, only dragging a touch in the middle of *Deadspeak*, the fourth book. The prose is unpretentious, elegantly chunky, and usually avoids the clichés of so much horror fiction (while Lumley's vampires range from the satisfyingly dark-and-handsome of a Christopher Lee to the medusan, writhing horrors of Cthulhu, he makes them really come to awful life through the devices of their method of speech, which can be so much more chilling).

His monsters, too, are always suitably dreadful and never leave the reader with the feeling that they were easily overcome. Much of their power lies in a love of playing slippery wordgames of a complexity that on occasion would do Tom Stoppard proud. As for the hero, Harry Keogh has hardly been a certain bet for the anguished reader: as we face the fifth, and last, book of *Necroscope*, *Deadspeak*, we're running with a hero who is beginning to resemble one of his enemies...

## A CAST OF UNDEAD

(in order of appetite...)

Thibor Ferency (Faethor's egg-son)  
Boris Dragoani (Thibor's egg-son)  
Faethor Ferency  
Yulian Bodescu (Thibor's blood-son)  
(Starside)  
Lady Karen  
Lord Shaitis  
Menor Maimbite  
Belath  
Vols Pinescu  
Lesk the Glut  
Harry Jr  
Janos Ferency (Faethor's blood-son)  
Harry Snr...





EXCLUSIVE!

FEAR PRESENTS AN EXCERPT FROM  
BRIAN LUMLEY'S NEW NOVEL OF TERROR

# NECROSCOPE V: DEADSPAWN

Although Harry Keogh, *Necroscope*, is now a vampire, his human emotions are still very strong; likewise his sense of justice. In order to track down a brutal serial killer — a slayer of young women who is also a necromancer, molesting his victims before and after death — Harry has resurrected and teamed up with Penny, a previous victim of the monster.

Now, with the girl, Harry has tracked Johnny Found to a motorway restaurant. But the police and E-Branch have tracked Harry there, too. In order to deal with his pursuers, the *Necroscope* has left Penny alone for a few moments in the diner...

**M**ERE MOMENTS — less than two minutes, three at most — but more than sufficient time that the menace of Johnny Found had got to Penny, cancelling her former resolve to 'be okay'. For she had known from the moment Harry left the glass doors swinging behind him and disappeared into the night that she would not be okay, not in the same enclosed space as this loathsome creature, not with fifty or five hundred people around her.

Mere moments, yes, but enough time for Johnny to make up his mind that Penny would be The One. Obviously the guy with the dark glasses hadn't been with her after all, and now she was on her own. What was more, she was aware

that Johnny was interested; he could feel her avoiding his eyes, even avoiding his thoughts, his existence. And suddenly. And suddenly he wondered: *does she know me?* But how could she possibly know him? What the fuck was going on here anyway?

He put aside his plate and placed his hands on the table, palms down, as if to push himself to his feet. And all the while he stared at Penny, willing her to look his way. She was looking his way, however obliquely, and saw him slowly rising. All the colour fled from her face as she too rose, slid out of her booth, backed away from him. She collided with a fat man with a tray and sent milk, hot food, bread rolls flying.

Johnny paced after her, smiling a deliberately feigned, surprised smile. It was as if he were saying, 'What's wrong? Did I startle you? Anyone watching would think: what on earth is wrong with that girl? Is she drunk, on drugs? So pale! And that nice young man looking so surprised, so astonished.'

And that was the whole thing of it: Johnny Found did look like a 'nice young man'. When Harry Keogh had seen him, he'd been surprised that he didn't more nearly fit the bill. Medium height and blocky build; blond, shoulder-length hair; good, square teeth in a full mouth with a droopy, almost innocent smile...only his slightly sallow complexion marred the boy-next-door image. That and his eyes, which were dark and deep-sunken. And the fact that he lived in a pigsty. And that he was a cold-blooded ravager of both living and dead flesh.

Penny blurted an apology to the gaping, spluttering fat man where he fingered his milk-soaked jacket, looked

up and saw Johnny closing with her, turned and fled for the swing doors. Johnny glanced around at the dozen or so nearby patrons in their booths, shrugged and pulled a wry face, as if to say: 'A weirdo...nothing to do with me, folks!' and calmly walked after her.

But he was so intent on his act, and on following the girl into the night, that as he caught the still swinging door on the inswing and passed out through it he didn't see the two sharp-eyed men starting to their feet and coming after him.

Outside, Penny turned frantically this way and that. A thin mist lay on the tarmac of the sprawling, tree-bordered car park; the headlights of vehicles on the nearby trunk road blinded her where they went scything by; she couldn't see Harry anywhere. But Johnny Found

**'Her heart very nearly stopped; she wanted to cry out but could only choke; she almost fainted into his arms.'**

could see Penny, and he was right behind her.

She heard the crunch of gravel on the path leading back to the diner's door but didn't dare turn round. Of course, it could be anyone...but it could also be him. She felt rooted to the spot, all of her senses straining to identify what if anything was going on behind her, but utterly incapable of turning round and using the most obvious sense of all. And: *God!* she prayed. *Please let it not be him!*

But it was.

'Penny?' he said, sly and yet somehow wnderingly.

Now she turned, but with a sort of slow-motion jerkiness, like a puppet controlled by a spastic puppeteer. And there he was, bearing down on her, wearing a painted-on smile under eyes that were jet black and flint hard.

Her heart very nearly stopped; she wanted to cry out but could only choke; she almost fainted into his arms. He caught her up, looked quickly all around and saw no one. And: 'Mine!' he gurgled, glaring into her half-gazed, sideways-sliding eyes behind their fluttering lids. 'All Johnny's now, Penny!'

He wanted to ask her questions, right now, right here, but knew she wouldn't hear them. She was sliding away from him — away from the horror of him — into another world. Escaping into unconsciousness. That was a laugh. Why, no way she could escape from Johnny! Not even into death!

Here, in front of the diner, was the car park; behind it was the lorry park, and dividing the two a belt of trees with paths between. Johnny picked Penny up, hurried with her into the cover of the trees, carried her through them light as a child. Behind him the E-Branch spotter and a Special Branch Detective Inspector erupted from the diner,

glanced this way and that, saw him hurrying into darkness.

They came running after him — and the Necroscope came loping after them.

Harry had heard her cry out. Not aloud, for she'd been too terrified to make any sound whatsoever. He'd heard her in his mind. She was his thrall, and she'd called to him. The call had come just as he was leaving the disabled police car, and at first he hadn't known what it was. But the vampire in him had known. He had seen Found carrying Penny into the screening trees, towards the lorry pack, and he'd seen the two men from the diner running after him. All of them were moving quickly, but not as quick as Harry.

His hope was more wolf — more alien — than human, and he covered ground like the shadow of a fast-fleeing cloud under the moon. But as he entered the trees on a diagonal course calculated to intercept Johnny Found and his captive, he knew he'd made a mistake. The trees and the shrubs beneath them were an ornamental screen designed to separate the two car parks, and as such they were protected by high wire-mesh fences. Precious seconds were lost as Harry came up against a fence, cursed and conjured a Möbius door. In another moment he cleared the belt of trees and emerged on the perimeter of the hard-standing...

...Where a reeling, gagging figure collided with him and brought him to a halt! It was the esper. He knew Harry at once — sensed the awesome power of his metaphysical mind, that and the vampire in him — and threw up a hand to ward him off. The hand was bloody as the gaping wound in his cheek, where Johnny Found had torn a third of his face away.

Harry held him upright, snarled at him, then thrust him towards one of the paths through the trees. 'Go and get help, quickly, before you bleed to death!'

And as the esper choked out something inarticulate and staggered away, the Necroscope reached out with his vampire awareness to cover the entire park: he found three people at once: Penny, unconscious; Johnny Found, furious and bloody; and the policeman, dead where Found's weapon had crashed through his ear to gouge into his brain.

Harry pin-pointed their location, conjured a door and ran through it... and out again at the rear of the Frigis Express truck, where even now Johnny was slamming home the bolt on the roller door. At his feet, the policeman lay crumpled in a pool of his own blood, the left side of his face a raw red pulp.

The Necromancer had taken the policeman's gun; he sensed Harry's presence, whirled, aimed and fired! Harry was coming head-on; he felt a colossal blow as the bullet smashed into his collarbone on the right side, spun him round and hurled him down on the tarmac.

Then startled by the explosion and the flash, Johnny was fumbling the gun and dropping it. Stumbling across Harry, he kicked at him where he lay curled up in his pain; and running past the trailer towards his truck's cab, the madman raved, cursed and laughed all in one.

The pain in Harry's shoulder was a living thing that took hold of his flesh with white-hot pincers and twisted it,

causing him to moan his agony. And he thought: *Bastard thing in my blood, my mind! Your fault, you beserk, headlong, idiot! Very well, you've caused me to be hurt — now heal me!*

Found was in his cab, starting up and revving the engine. Air-brakes hissed and the reversing lights blazed crimson to match Harry's eyes or the jelly coagulating on the side of the dead policeman's head. Racked by pain, the Necroscope saw the huge bulk of the truck jerk, shudder and start backing up; in another moment a pair of its twinned wheels skidded viciously, then gripped and dragged the policeman's body under. Blood and guts gushed as the wheels lifted up barely an inch and the weight of the truck crushed the corpse like toothpaste from a tube.

**'At his feet, the policeman lay crumpled in a pool of his own blood, the left side of his face a raw red pulp.'**

*He's lucky he's dead! Harry dazedly, unthinkingly thought. It's something he wouldn't want to happen while he was still alive! They were instinctive thoughts, shocked out of him by the squelching eruption of brains and shit and flailing guts, but they were also deadspook and the policeman heard him.*

Exhaust gasses belched in Harry's face where he rolled desperately from the path of the reversing truck; the scarlet-dripping wheels missed him by inches, but through all the roar and the stink and the mess on the tarmac he heard and was riveted by the policeman's answer:

*But I did feel it! And God, it was like dying twice! And Harry's blood — even his blood — froze as he remembered who was driving the truck: Johnny Found, necromancer, whose actions his victims could feel even as the teeming dead had once felt Dragosani's!*

Then the air-brakes hissed again and the truck jerked to a halt, shuddered, started forward, turned and rumbled away towards the exit. Johnny Found was making his escape, with Penny aboard. But:

*No you fucking don't! Harry fixed the truck's location in his mind, got to his knees, toppled through a Möbius door and out again into the refrigerated trailer. It was dark in there but that was nothing to the Necroscope. He saw Penny, crawled to her, put his left hand under her head and drew it into his lap. She opened her eyes and looked into his where they blazed.*

*'Harry, I... I didn't stay in the diner,' she whispered. 'I know,' he growled. 'Did he hurt you?'*

*'No,' she shook her head, but weakly. 'I... I think I just fainted.'*

Harry had no time to waste. Not now,

for his blood was up. Literally! 'Cling to me,' he said.

She did as she was told and Harry let the Möbius equations roll across the computer screen of his mind. One moment later and Penny felt the awesome immensity of the Möbius Continuum, and in the next gravity returned where they fell prone onto Harry's bed in the house outside Bonnyrigg. 'This time stay here!' he told her. And before she could even sit up he was gone again...

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

By the time Johnny Found's thundering Frigis Express truck took the curves on the roundabout at the junction of the A1 and A46 outside Newark, he was much calmer and showing a lot of skill and driving discipline. Had there been a police patrol car stationed at the roundabout, its officer probably wouldn't look twice at him.

There was no patrol car, however, just Harry Keogh.

Using Found's knife, the Necroscope had followed the truck's progress in a series of short Möbius jumps, waiting for his quarry to slow down a little before attempting what must be an extremely accurate jump on a moving object; which was to say, directly into Found's cab! Also, it must be accomplished as smoothly as possible, so as not to jar his badly shattered collarbone. The pain of that alone would have left any other man writhing on his back or entirely unconscious. But Harry wasn't any other man. Indeed, with every passing moment he was a little less a man and more a monster, albeit one with a human soul.

And as the necromancer straightened up his truck off the roundabout and back onto the A1, that was when Harry emerged from the eternal darkness of the Möbius Continuum into the empty seat on his left. At first Found didn't see him, or if he did he considered him a shadow in the corner of his eye. And Harry sat still and quiet in the very corner of the cab, pressed against the door with his face and upper body turned towards the driver. He kept his eyes three-quarters shut, studying Johnny's face, which had seemed previously scarcely to match up with any of the descriptions given him by the girls, but which he now saw to be very terrible indeed.

As for Johnny himself: he knew that it was all over. Too many people had seen him tonight, in the diner, the car park, with or close to the girl. Indeed, it seemed to him that he'd been set up. They had traced him, then trapped him with a girl who was the image of one of his victims. And he had fallen for it. Well, two of the bastards at least had paid for it, and the girl would pay, too, when he climbed into the trailer with her, chopped a passage through the orbit of her left eye and fucked her brain!

These were his thoughts, which Harry, looking directly at him, as clearly as — more clearly than — the pages of a book. And if before there had been any doubt at all in the Necroscope's mind that his course of action was the right one, these were also the thoughts which dispelled it. Now, as Johnny dwelled more intently on the pleasure he



intended taking with or from the girl, Harry very quietly spoke up and said:

'None of those things will happen, for the girl isn't in the trailer. I freed her. As I intend freeing all of the dead. From their terror, Johnny. From your tyranny.'

Found's jaw had fallen open at the first word. There was a trickle of saliva, slime, froth, in the left-hand corner of his mouth, which now ran down under his lip and into the dimple of his chin. He said, 'Who—?' and his coal black eyes slowly slid to the left in their deep sockets...then stood out like inkblots on the gaunt parchment which until a moment ago had been the flushed, bloated flesh of his face.

'You're a goner, Johnny,' Harry told him, and opened his furnace eyes to reflect ruddily on the other's paralysed, astonished features.

But Found's paralysis was short-lived, and the rest of it — his almost immediate response — was all instinct, so that not even the Necroscope could have seen it coming. What? he gurgled, taking his left hand from the wheel and reaching up behind his head for a meat hook where it hung from the cab's frame. 'A goner? Well one of us is, that's for sure!'

Harry's plan had been simple: as Found attacked him, he'd conjure a Möbius door and wrestle him through it. But it was difficult enough just to take hold of a man in the cab of a truck, let alone when he was welding a meat hook.

Johnny had seen the huge bloodstain on Harry's jacket and recognized him as the one he'd shot back in the diner's vehicle park. How he came to be in the cab was something else, but he surely wouldn't be much good for anything with a gaping hole in his shoulder. And even less good when Johnny was finished with him. 'Whoever you are,' he grunted, swinging the hook, 'you're, dead fucking meat!'

The blow was awkward and left-handed, but still Harry couldn't avoid it. He ducked down a little and the question mark of shining metal passed over his shoulder, swooped down on him and caught in the hole which the bullet had torn out of his back. He gasped his renewed agony as Found yanked him towards him and glared into his face. Then —

— Using Harry as a counterweight, the necromancer lifted his left leg, reached it across Harry's knees and kicked open the cab door. And as the truck careened down the twin lanes he kicked again, this time at Harry himself, and simultaneously released his hold on the meat hook.

Sliding free of his seat into the rush of night air, the Necroscope made a desperate grab for the wildly swinging door. Luckily the window was down; as he looped his arms through the frame, so his feet slammed down onto the running board. Johnny could no longer reach him without letting go of the wheel, but he could at least try to shake him loose.

Headless of other vehicles, the maniac threw his huge truck this way and that across the lanes, and Harry hung on like grim death until the thought suddenly occurred, *Why not a big door? Why not the biggest bloody door you could ever imagine?*

On his left and almost directly under his skidding, skittering feet, a car was sideswiped and sent spinning, crashing through the roadside barrier in a shriek of ruptured metal. It smashed into the embankment nose first and exploded like a bomb. But the big truck rushed on and left people frying and dying in its wake, and in the cab Johnny fuelled himself with their pain and knew that even dead they would hear his crazy laughter.

## 'The big truck rushed on and left people frying and dying in its wake.'

Enough! Harry thought, and conjured his giant door — on the road directly in front of the truck.

The rumble and thunder and rocking violence of the vehicle died away in a moment as it plunged through the Möbius door into darkness absolute; likewise the mad laughter of Johnny Found, shut off as he delivered a single gonging thought into the awesome Möbius Continuum: WHAT?

What indeed!

The beam of his headlights went on forever, cutting a tunnel through infinity. But apart from the headlight beams and the truck where its mass surrounded him, there was nothing whatsoever. No road, no sound, no sensation of motion, nothing.

WHAAAAAT!? Johnny screamed again, deafeningly, in both his and the Necroscope's mind.

But: *No good shouting now, Johnny, Harry told him, hanging on the door and guiding the truck, aiming it like a missile to its final destination. Like I said, you're a goner. And we're very nearly there. Welcome to hell!*

Johnny let go the wheel and sprawled across the wide seat, reaching for the Necroscope where he clung to the door of the cab. But too late; they were there; Harry conjured another door in front of the truck and pushed himself free, slowing his motion to an abrupt halt. And the truck went rushing on —

— Out of the Möbius Continuum to emerge inches over the surface of a narrow road. It crashed down, bounced, rocked and roared; and as its free-spinning tyres found purchases on the tarmac, so it rocketed forward. Johnny screamed as he saw the sharp bend coming up where the road skirted a long, high wall of ivy-clad stone. He made a desperate grab for the steering wheel, but the truck had already mounted the kerb. It shot across a narrow strip of grass, tore through a mass of night black shrubbery, slammed into the wall...and stopped.

Stopped dead.

...But not Johnny!

As the truck and its trailer concertinaded — as the wall cracked and sent stone debris flying — as massive petrol tanks shattered and showered fuel onto hot, tortured metal, turning the truck into a blazing inferno — so Johnny was

ripped out of his driver's seat and hurled through the wind-screen. Bones in his left arm and shoulder broke where, pinwheeling, he hit the top of the wall before crashing down onto something hard far on the other side.

There was pain, more pain than he'd ever known; and then, apart from flickering firelight from beyond the wall, and a booming, *whooshing* explosion as the emergency tank blew, there was a deafening silence. The silence of mental concentration, of *knowing* even through waves of agony that someone — several pitiless someones — were watching him.

He cranked his neck up an inch from where sharp gravel chips stuck to the tattered mesh of his face, and saw Harry Keogh standing there, looking down on him. And behind the red-eyed Necroscope there were other — people? Things, anyway — which Johnny knew should never be. They came (crawled, staggered, crumbled) forward, and one of them was or had once been a girl. Johnny backed off, pushing with his raw hands, sliding on his belly and his knees, skidding in the bloodied gravel until he collided with something hard, which brought him up short. He somehow turned his head and looked back, and saw what had stopped him: a headstone.

'A...a...a fucking graveyard!' he gasped.

And Harry Keogh said, 'End of the road Johnny.'

Pamela Trotter said, *you kept your promise, Harry. And he nodded.*

And Johnny Found, necromancer, knew what had passed between them. 'No!' he gasped. Then screamed: 'Noooooo!'

He would get to his feet. Even broken, shattered, cut to ribbons, he would flee from the hell of it. But Pamela's dead friends fell or flopped on him and bore him down, and a hand that shed rotting flesh and maggots stoppered his mouth. Then she came to him and searched among his rags, until she found his new knife. And close up like that — badly gone into corruption though she was, even with the flesh beginning to slough from her face — still he knew her.

*You remember that good time we had?* she said. *You didn't even say thanks, Johnny, and you didn't leave me anything to remember you by. Well, now think it's time I had me a small memento. Or even a big one, eh? Something I can take back down into the earth with me, right?* She showed him his own knife and smiled at him, and her teeth were long where the blackened gums had shrivelled back from them.

Harry turned away and shut out the sight; shut out Found's silent, frenzied shrieking, too, from his mind. But to Pamela he said, 'Make sure you kill him.'

It made him feel cold deep down inside but he knew that Found was colder, cruefter. Anyway, this had always been Harry's way:

An eye for an eye, or whatever...

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

This has been only one of many explosive scenes from Brian Lumley's riveting, soon to be released *Deadspawn*, 5th in the bestselling *Necroscope* series.

## FEAR FICTION

"Is all that we see or seem  
But a dream within a dream?"  
*Edgar Allan Poe*

I awake. In my mind is the cobweb ghost of a dream, a girl whose face I failed to see, though I knew she was as beautiful as Venus. Before I could see, she was taken into a silent fog by a silent black train. The memory fills me with a soft melancholy, and I try to push it away, and lie alone, looking at the high pale ceiling. I think about what I might do today, where my life might lead me next. Perhaps whatever it is I am waiting for will come to me today.

How is today different from yesterday? I try to see a new colour in the warm thread of early sunlight that has crept across the floor to lie upon my sheets. The thread leads to the narrow gap between the curtains, through which I can see the flickering of the leaves, as they are stirred by the early morning breeze.

I rise and cross the room to the window. My view through the gap grows clearer. The trees in the gardens quiver as the morning blows through them, the sunlight picking out bright leaves and showing them to me in flashes too quick to see.

I open the curtains wide, the sunlight rushing through the room in a sudden brassy wash. As the drapes shift and swing, I blink at the hard-edged morning, and think I see a figure, tall and pale, standing by a tree. I peer out. The figure stands motionless, one pallid hand resting on the tree's old trunk. I stood by that tree yesterday, or the day before, and touched the deeply gouged bark, and the ancient roughness felt solid and permanent.

But who is in the garden now? I turn and cross the sunlight to where my clothes are thrown across the chair, dress quickly, and run out onto the landing.

And stop.

In the small window seat that looks down upon the fountains, there sits a figure with its back to me. It is male, tall, my build. It is an odd, uniformly whitish colour, like watered milk. The clothes are like mine, and the short hair reminds me of my own. I dread the face.

"Excuse me," I address the silent back, but the figure does not respond. I notice with a shock that it casts no shadow; the sunlight that chequers the floor is unblemished.

A trembling threatens to overtake me, but I move forward, circling the phantom, and its face comes into view: the familiar nose and wide-set eyes. Its mouth, held in a perpetual secret smile, is mine.

I stare at my double, and, after a time,

# Micheal Reed THE DARK AND SECRET HEART

follow its cold gaze through the window. It appears to be staring into empty space, but I remember sitting here — how long ago now? — and seeing a squirrel, up on its haunches, washing, in the shade of the trees around the fountains. I had felt peaceful then, and enjoyed the squirrel's show in the quiet evening. The ghost's gaze never falters: it is a perfect portrait of me at that moment.

And yet it is also like someone else, someone who is my physical twin, but whose soul is of a somehow different colour, or voice. My mouth is dry. I back away from the phantom, who still stares out, at the now absent squirrel.

I turn, and without looking back I walk briskly to the dining room, thinking of breakfast. Surely what I saw was just a waking dream, a fugitive from my night-time imaginings, which appeared as I was shaking off the last, grainy remnants of sleep.

But there is no escape. In the dining room, facing me, yet apparently regarding someone or something unseen, is another of the apparitions. The house is infested!

With a cry, I turn, and run, bewildered, out into the morning.

What can these visions mean? These silent ghosts that I once was? As I run through the gardens, my dream of the girl on the train flickers across my mind like a sputtering candle, and now I can hardly recall her at all. She is almost completely obscured by the cold mist.

In my mad haste, I almost run headlong into the first ghost that I saw, from my window. Its hand rests coldly on the bark of the tree. In my attempt to evade the vision, I stumble and fall to the ground.

Up in the high window of the house, there are faces. My face, different every time, hiding a hundred frozen versions of myself. All trapped forever in their own tiny moments. I sense each silent yearning to join and be whole.

As I scramble up and stagger away from the ghostly company, I have to tear my eyes away from the newest phantom: me, staring in disbelief at the shining windows. Already, this vision feels like someone else.

Soon, I reach the wall.  
It is high and crumbling, overgrown

with many tangled plants. Escape is unthinkable.

I collapse, exhausted, onto the bed of fallen leaves. They are soft and dry. Through the trees and thorns, I can see the pale shapes of my past selves, gleaming coldly. I shut my eyes.

And soon, I sleep.

Later — how much later? — I awake and walk through a cool evening. The trees have grown into tall shadows, reaching bare branches jaggedly against the dark.

I find I am walking along a path I don't remember, and I have the feeling that I am being paced by another, someone who seems both close by and very far away at the same time. The strongest sensation that comes to me is one of age.

I stumble through the knotted trees until I reach a sudden clearing. Around me is a forest. The trees grow in straight, ordered rows, as if planted by man. They are divided into sections, with paths running between the huge slabs of woodland, the whole mess receding deeper into the night. I cannot see how large it really is, but it is surely enormous; I feel that I am in the midst of something cosmically vast, apparently endless, reaching far into the dark world.

I blink, amazed that I should never have discovered this place before. I have walked in the gardens at least a thousand times, but have never come across this great forest, with its tall trees and shadowed paths!

Now the sky lightens, as a morning approaches. The moon is carried off on rushing cloud. There are shapes just visible, filling the spaces between the trees.

As I approach, I find toys, dolls and books scattered in the grass and leaves. I recognise only some. One little figure, which I hold up to the glowing sky to see the cracks, makes my eyes suddenly hot with tears, though I do not think I know the thing.

Shadows sweep the earth. A sun is lifted high above the trees. I feel the odd presence again, and wonder if it senses me.

I put down the cracked doll and walk into the trees. There are little clearings, like rooms, with heavy rooves of leaves and branches. The sun pricks a floor of





needles. There is a small, low table in one of these forest rooms. Surrounding the table are four little chairs, too small for an adult to use. I feel a kind of vertigo, as if looking down at these things from a great and precipitous height. Yet, at the same time, I can reach out and touch them.

Walking around these great wooden chambers makes me imagine that I am exploring a heart. A huge, dark heart.

There are rooms leading from rooms. In some, the light barely penetrates at all, and the shapes are hardly visible. In the near-blackness I touch surfaces of wood or wool, constantly amazed at the confused rushes of emotion they produce. It is as if I were peering down into a deep well at something almost indistinguishable, a shifting shape that continually hints at some grand revelation that never comes.

In one chamber, there is only a smell, of old, charred wood. It is a thick, earthy aroma, and I grope desperately for the meaning of the feelings that come to me. A sense that I never want to leave this room disturbs me.

And once again, even here, the near-far presence of the Other, close enough to touch.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

**E**ventually, I find myself in the original clearing once more, and the forest is darkening again. I see the cracked doll and pick it up, and watch the chambers fill with night, like blood. I can almost hear the soft sound, like a distant stream.

I turn, and walk back through the trees, feeling the forest swell hugely behind me. The trees become tangled and overgrown once more, and I take a twisting path that disorients me, but lets me out at last beside the cracked fountains.

On impulse, I look up at the windows of the house, but see nothing but mirrors of the night. I wonder what it was that I expected to see up there.

The fountains gurgle and splash. I walk past them, and into the sprawling house.

Soon, I reach my room. Outside, vague colours in the sky promise another cool morning. I feel absently in my pockets for something which I thought I had put there, but they are empty. I look about the room, wondering what I am doing up.

Have I been sleepwalking again?  
I undress and climb into bed, suddenly exhausted.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

I awake.  
I awake.  
I awake...

Michael Reed is 21 and in the last stages of University in Norwich. He hopes to eventually become a full-time writer and is presently attempting a novel. His first published story appeared in the BFS magazine, *Dark Horizons*. Michael will soon be living in London.

# FICTION FILE 48

## MARY SCOTT



**It's a mad, mad world...writer Mary Scott talks to Liz Holliday about the nature of obsessions**

**I**t has been said that the walls of the genre ghettos are crumbling. Sometimes it seems hard to credit this, what with the preponderance of ten-part trilogies under the fantasy labels in bookshops.

Then again, there are writers like Mary Scott. Her first collection — *Nudists May Be Encountered* (Serpent's Tail) — is far from conventional fantasy. It's far from conventional anything.

Scott had been working in public relations, but gave that job up to go into full-time writing. 'I wrote one story — the last one in the book — and sent it to a publisher who then wrote me a nice letter explaining it wasn't for them because it wasn't ideologically sound,' says Scott. 'It was a feminist publishers. The story was the one about the singing penis — that's fantasy, sort of, isn't it? They (the publishers) thought the penis wouldn't be such a nice character. They sent the story back, and suggested *Serpent's Tail*.'

Scott struck lucky with *Serpent's Tail*, and set about writing more stories. There is one about a disappearing corporate manager, and another about a woman who turns into a witch at a party. There is a tale set on Earth and on a planet almost without women, where everyone wears body-bubbles to stop them touching. But there is also one full-blooded science fiction story, *Balance of Trade*, which nevertheless manages to look sideways at the genre.

'I love the ideas of different genres,' says

Scott. 'I have read a lot of science fiction, masses and masses of it. I wanted to do something which was set in another world, and yet the other-worldliness of it was not in the sense of an Imagined world in the way that it would be in a traditional science fiction story. It is very, very logically constructed — but on the other hand it's complete nonsense. Whereas in a straight science fiction story you would actually believe in the world, mine is completely mad. There are inhabitants of different planets selling twisted bits of their own limbs. The way in which the planets relate to each other is complete nonsense, and it was meant to be, because of the nonsensical nature of the whole thing: that the whole balance of trade collapses because someone withdraws their emotional labour.'

Scott would not, perhaps, draw such a distinct line between genre SF and the rest of her work, however. 'I am actually very close to the philosophy of science fiction. All of my stories are about — as science fiction is — the 'what if?' What if the thing that can't happen happens? Also, I love the notion of adventures.'

But not, it has to be said, adventures in the slam-bang waving guns around manner. 'Quite a lot of them are little adventures,' Scott explains. 'Like someone going to a nudist beach, which is quite a big adventure for that particular character. Some of them are simply completely ludicrous ideas taken to extremes, like *The Section Head*. Well, bureaucracies are like that. Or the mad civil servant who advises both sides in a dispute. It's taking an obsession to its limit. I love writing about obsessions — like the woman who is obsessed with pests. I suppose I ought to qualify adventures. It's the whole area of 'what if', and the logical outcome of things; of not necessarily sticking to what does actually happen in everyday life all the time...'

# NEARLY DEADLY

By James Robert Smith

**H**e was very tired, like a wildcat that has been chased for a long, long time by a tenacious dog. He was Redmon, a guildsman thief, and it wasn't anything like a dog that was chasing him. After their last encounter, it looked to be a redhaired youth dogging his heels so that he would have to turn and fight. But it wasn't a horse. No. He was sure of that, now.

Redmon had planned his moves as well as he could under the circumstances. He was in this outland only because his reputation (if not his face) had become so notorious in Mangrove, the city. He'd become too bold for his own good, stealing things that should have remained in their owner's possession. No merchant would touch the things he had stolen. No fence would handle them. The consequences for being caught with the il-khan's little

treasures were too terrible to risk for the fat, sweating middlemen. So Redmon had merely ditched them, and had fled the city before anyone could point the finger at him. He was too good, too brash. Too foolish. He was making enemies in the guild, and he knew it.

A month's riding into the western frontiers had brought him to a province he did not know, even by name. The land was thick with stones that did not inhabit the growth of gnarly forests broken here and there by poor farms. Redmon could barely understand the dialect the natives spoke, and he did not like the place, especially when the hills loomed about him and the mist hung low on their shoulders like dewy cotton. He longed for Mangrove's busy streets, crowded taverns; he wished to dance along dung-scattered ways thick with the press of people.

But he could not go back just now. It was still too soon, and some higher guildsman might not think that he had yet done enough penance. Redmon could imagine the crackdown that must surely have occurred after he had fled. Perhaps

the palace walls were adorned with the headless corpses of many of his fellows. He shuddered, not wanting to think of his own foolishness.

The more he travelled the outland trails, the less he saw that he liked. Those rock strewn hills seemed to go on and on, intersected with splashing streams and little freshets that sprayed him when he drew too near. His pony handled the terrain at a steady, even pace, and it had not split a hoof or broken a bone. Yet.

He did not know what he would do when he needed a new mount. Redmon had brought very little of value with him, and the folk that he met seemed very poor, the kind who would guard a horse as they might guard their own lives. Soon, he knew, he must find something worth stealing, something worth his effort. His food was nearly gone, and his coins were dwindled to less than silver.

That was when he came upon the temple.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

**L**ike the rest of the land in which he Lrode, the temple seemed very poor. Outwardly it was constructed of plain, stone walls, pierced here and there by tiny windows which showed as squares of uninviting black in the grey stone. There was a bell tower at the back of the structure; the old type that rose like a low blister, holding a huge cast bell that had to be struck with a great hammer. The sound of that bell was what attracted him; but its depressing tolling almost chased him away.

**'Perhaps the palace walls were adorned with the headless corpses of many of his fellows.'**

Despite the deep, threatening tone of the bell, Redmon rode his pony down the rutted trail that led to the temple. There had been people — peasants, mainly — filing into the squat building. At first he thought that it was a temple of the goddess, Morn. But he could see where her icons had been torn down; their faint outlines were yet visible on the walls. There was nothing new in their places. He could not tell what god was worshipped here, and none of the folk entering the place seemed to wear any kind of symbol upon their garments or about their necks. He was ignorant.

Still, no one said a cross word to him as he rode near. Few even seemed to more than notice him; only a handful nodded acknowledgment of the horseman. They all filed into the building, one by one, silent but for an occasional murmur: a chant. From inside, he could hear the clink of coins. Silver mostly, but he heard some gold.

After a short time he climbed down from his pony, and he went into the temple, tying his mount to a post beyond the yard. The animal sipped at a great stone hollowed out and full of rainwater. Leaving it to drink, he went in.

As he had suspected, the temple was

as dreary as the people of this province. There were few candles to light the place, and the pews had mostly been removed, leaving little space for the worshippers to sit. Perhaps, he mused, these people believed in the austere aspects of life. He well knew religions that taught abstinence and want as virtues — he laughed at them. In Mangrove he would laugh. But here...

The lack of seeds did not seem to matter just now, at any rate. What seemed to be happening was a collection service. He watched as the drably clad folk moved past a deep wooden bowl. As each passed, they tossed in their offerings. Quickly, Redmon felt about in his pocket, reaching for the single half pence he knew was there. He was happy to sacrifice that bit of coin for a look at a possible target. Perhaps he could take a share of it for himself before he left this depressing land.

Finding himself a place in the line, he edged forward, slowly, looking about, sighting unbarred windows, great beams that an oak could negotiate as if a wide street. It seemed an easy enough target, on the whole.

Before he saw the man, he heard his deep voice and looked forward. Overseeing the collection of funds was a huge brute. Hardly what one would expect of the priestly type. He wore his raiment like a great, loose bag, the hood standing open about his bull neck, showing his coarse, bearded face. Old scars lined his thick jaw, and his shoulders were as wide as a warrior's. Beneath his hard, icy stare, the people tossed in what they could. Redmon began to wonder if he could not slip out of line without attracting too much attention. He didn't think so, and moved ahead, inching along with the others, inevitably.

Yes, as Redmon drew near, he could see that the priest was the unlikelyst of fellows. But then, they usually were. This did indeed appear to be more a figure of a guard or soldier than a man of the cloth. His eyes, though! His eyes seemed cut of blue ice, and his gaze speared all who passed before him. No one smiled. No one spoke. They merely gave.

The thief felt for the small coin in his pocket, fingering it — the only sign of nervousness he would allow himself. Redmon was a cool one; in his profession, one had to be. Still, he was a bit afraid that the surly priest might become angry at his meagre offering. It was a chance he'd have to take. There were three ahead of him. Two. One.

He tossed his copper into the gaping bowl.

The priest did nothing, uttered no word of ire. Inwardly, Redmon breathed a sigh of relief, and another for a glance at the rewards of his next theft.

♦♦♦♦♦

When darkness came, thick with unseen mist and no moon, Redmon scrambled back down from the rugged hill upon which he'd climbed. He left his horse on the far side of it, a good two miles from the temple. It had taken him three days before he'd satisfied himself that he was familiar with the trailless slope he would flee upon once he had his booty in hand. He hadn't wanted to

spend too many days lurking about the grey, gnarly woods for fear one of the empty folks who dwelled in this land might notice him and spread the word. So he'd built no fire and had remained deep in brush and forest. Now, he was ready.

At night the temple was unguarded. As he had noted before, no one hung about its walls or seemed to spy from any of those meagre windows. It looked to be an easy mark, but he knew better than to assume that. He'd seen too many guildsmen gutted in the acts of easy jobs.

Using the cover of the arthritic oaks that seemed to grow everywhere, he crept onto the templeyard itself. He stopped, not breathing, listening. There

**'His eyes seemed cut of blue ice, and his gaze speared all who passed before him.'**

was no one. His wide eyes saw nothing; his straining ears heard nothing but the wind, the rustle of some bird taking flight. He smelled only the earth. Soundlessly, on light feet, he scampered to the walls of the temple.

Again, he stopped, straining to sense the presence of another. No one. No one. No one. He was sure of it, and ready to enter the place.

From a distance, and in the light of day, he had chosen a wall that seemed unsuitable to climb. Sliding along the pebbly soil around the structure, he found the spot on that wall below a window. With fingers calloused from constant practice, he climbed the wall, finding purchase in tiny cracks and nubs of granite that stood out from the surface of the hard stone. Soundlessly, he went up, pulling his lean weight with whipcord muscles.

As he drew himself to the window, he halted. Still, he sensed no one, heard nothing.

To his right, a wide beam hewn from that same oak that grew everywhere offered a way across the huge central room in which he had been days before. Carefully, he stepped from the window to the beam, slithering along its length till he was above the temple coffer. With an iron hook he fastened one end of hemp cord to the stout beam, readied to lower himself to the floor. Gazing about, his pupils fat and black, he saw that he was truly alone.

He had calculated correctly and the other end of the tether did not touch the stone floor. In silence, he lowered himself. Catsteps took him to the offering bowl, itself now empty. But he knew that it would be. He had to discover where the treasury was located; and suspected that it was somewhere close — a room near the bell tower. Only a search could confirm his suspicion, and he knew that he would not have long to find it and be away.

With great skill he slithered across the floor to a hallway, down its length. In a little room there he found what he was hunting. Gold only. That was all he filled his leather pouch with. The only sound he made was when he allowed a single

clink of a pair of coins that tapped as he drew the bag tight.

Later, he doubted that tiny noise had alerted the priest. Surely it had been only a coincidence that had brought the man to the room wherein the treasures of the temple were stored. Perhaps the dour man had merely been paranoid over the safety of the collection of the community's wealth. That had probably been all that had brought him, his mass blocking the room's single doorway.

"Drop what you've taken." His deep voice filled the space, freezing Redmon, surprising the proud thief, chilling him to the core.

Redmon gazed up, and for a horrible instant seemed to see the priest's icicle eyes glowering back at him from the tar of the night. Then he took hold of his panic, replaced it with calm, and saw only the bulk of robed figure that blocked his exit. His only reply was the hiss of his blade coming free of its leather scabbard, slicing air with its edge. He didn't want to fight. If he could, he would dodge the big man and.

Smash!

The heavy bludgeon missed Redmon, barely, and crashed into the chest he had lockpicked moments before. Splinters flew. Sparks glared in the black, and he saw that the priest wielded a flint-headed axe that he knew must weigh as much as a big guard dog. Redmon stopped, weaving aside.

"Thief! The bludgeon fell again; the priest grunted, holding it back, keeping the weight from pulling him down. 'Bastard!' The axe came around, barely missing again. Redmon lunged for the door.

Luckily, it was not the axehead that met Redmon's scalp. It was merely the other man's great left fist that popped along his skull and sent him reeling. Powerful though it was, the blow was not enough to knock him senseless. But the thief knew that he would not get by this man through stealth and agility.

Waiting for the next move, Redmon dropped to the floor to avoid the axe once more. Quickly, using his spare weight, his superior speed, he leaped up, blade forward, spearing his knife hand, his arm, his body. The point pierced heavy wool, passed bothersome ribs; the edge sheared flesh, met a lung.

In the dark Redmon heard the priest. "Hihkk! A-huhk!" There was a slurp as the man drew breath through two mouths. The axe fell heavily to the stony floor. Redmon fled.

Behind, he could hear the priest muttering, chanting a prayer. He felt that the holy man must know his wound was mortal. Quickly, quickly, he was up his rope, out the window, down the wall. The forest hid him as he scrambled up rock-strewn slopes.

♦♦♦♦♦

He was not halfway to his horse when he heard it: the bell tolling, loud even this far from its great metal bulk. Through the darkness he fled, hurrying no faster than he had before. Again he reached deep for that cool reserve upon which he so relied. He must not panic. When he reached his pony, he mustn't be so tired that he would have to rest. He had to ride fast, and far. Quickly.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

At the temple a peasant who lived on his small farm nearby found the priest lying in a steaming pool of blood at the base of the great bell. The padded hammer that was used to strike the bell lay just beyond the man's outstretched fingers. Steadily, the priest chanted. When the peasant knelt to listen, the priest gripped him with iron fingers, drew him close.

The peasant heard.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Dawn was just beginning to streak the sky when Redmon made it to the place where he had stashed his mount. Going to it, he stopped barely enough to catch his breath. But he was not winded, merely tired after his steady jog across the long ridgeline in the night. For a short time he had been frightened that dogs might have been put on his trail before he could make it to the pony. But that seemed not to have happened. Quickly, he lashed the thick pouch along the pack strung upon the pony's rump. He climbed atop its back.

Because he had been breathing loudly, sure of himself, he didn't hear the baying sooner than he should have. And not so far behind it, he could feel the pounding of a single set of hooves; what must be a large horse, one able to traverse the stony way he had fled.

Redmon urged the pony to a gallop, out of the brushy hollow in which he had left it. Someone had found his trail much quicker than he had imagined. It must be a superior tracker sent after him so soon. Damn! He knew the risks.

Weighing the chance that the pony wouldn't catch a leg in the thick brush, he made his way out of the close stuff, finding the trail he had chosen to escape upon. It was wide, moderately travelled, and he was fairly certain that it did not wind toward the temple or any village near the temple. But the one who chased him had followed over the steep hills, disdaining trails, if they existed. His pursuer was mad, probably, with religious fervour and righteous indignation. The worst possible predator, Redmon had his pony up to a run. The hound bayed again, much nearer.

The sun climbed into the sky. Redmon's pony began to tire. Behind him, the hound still bayed, the hoofbeats still thundered heavily. They were gaining. His pony was too poor to do the trick, had been on the trails too long. Redmon was in trouble, but there was nothing he could do but run as long as the pony could go.

And then the hound was there, slashing at his mount's hooves, lunging again and again at Redmon's legs. The thief lashed at the dog with a length of cord. Sadly, the rope looped about the dog's thick neck, and the weight of the stumbling hound caught Redmon by surprise. He fell from his pony which galloped on a hundred feet before pulling up.

As the hound tried to dismount itself from the loop of hemp, Redmon was on it, stabbing with his long knife. But for a bruise or two, he was unhurt. From around the bend he had just traversed, he could hear the pursuer

approaching, almost within sight. He dove into the brush that closed in about the trail, the dog's corpse lying where Redmon had left it.

At least there was only one chasing him, thus far. Or only one who had caught up with him. He could still trust to his proficiency with the long knife, his speed and agility. In his day he had bested excellent fighters, and he could do so again. From cover, he paused and looked back.

A peasant! He couldn't believe it. The man climbing from the great plowhorse was merely a farmer! Spying the dog, the other turned to the forest, slashing with a dull sword at the growth that blocked his way. Redmon watched.

The thief lay, waiting, as the farmer hacked at the green brush, tearing at it with the little-used, notched sword he wielded. He seemed clumsy with it, unused to the art of swordplay. The thief did not think he would have too difficult a time with him, and would even try only to subdue if he had the time. But he didn't have the time. He had to escape, quickly. So...

As soon as the farmer drew near enough, Redmon leaped from where he hid. He had waited until the peasant had drawn up parallel to him, and it was like a child's game to thrust forward with his blade. Once only, and he turned and raced back to the trail.

A woman and a small child, a boy, stood there in the trail and saw him. Redmon glared back at them: a tired peasant woman of husky build, dark features, and the tow headed boy gazed at him with blue eyes. He did not need to harm them, and dashed past the pair.

Pausing for only a second, he examined the farmer's horse. It was an old animal; Redmon was surprised it had followed as it had. But it was less than his pony, even now, so he left it.

He remounted the pony, galloped away.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

From the trail, the woman heard the moan, the chanting. She was a wife, a mother, a tender to life. She went down the embankment to the source of the painful sounds, leaving her small son on the trail. It was quite easy to find the man lying in broken vegetation there on the forest floor. All about him the twigs and saplings were bent, the loam soaking in his blood. Still he moaned, calling out. She knelt beside him. And she listened.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Into the day Redmon pushed the pony to the limits of its endurance, to the limits of his own. He did not stop for more than a handful of minutes. To let the pony sip at some stream, or to force some grass into its mouth. It was only in late afternoon that he felt safe enough to halt by the side of a river that splashed over huge boulders, misting spray into the air. He had to stop, or his pony would surely die.

Climbing down, he led the animal to the edge of the water, let it drink its fill. He, too, knelt by the pool's shore, dipping his cupped hand into the cool stuff. Behind, the clatter of hoof against peb-

ble alerted him not an instant too soon.

Redmon spun, his bloodied knife hissing free of its scabbard. He stared with weary eyes.

At the peasant woman.

Yes, he saw, it was the peasant woman he had left by the side of the trail. He relaxed, somewhat, as she climbed down from the massive plowhorse she rode. It was similar to, but not the same as the horse the farmer had ridden to his death. Obviously, it was her own. But why was she here? Had she followed Redmon? Alone? She knelt to the stony ground as he watched.

It was always the easy marks, he thought to himself as the rock she threw glanced off his skull.

**'He leaped up, blade forward, spearing his knife hand, his arm, his body.'**

He reeled in genuine pain as the stone rebounded from his forehead. Stumbling, he fell into the water, and the shock of the cold liquid brought him to his senses. He kicked backwards, pushing himself into deeper water, where he could live. The woman had followed him in, was struggling with the weight of her dress which soaked up the moisture and clung to her legs. Despite himself, he lunged towards her, slashing with his knife which had never left his grip.

On his first try, of course, he stabbed her deeply, a killing wound. The clear water about them ran suddenly red. The thief moaned in horror of what he had to do, and staggered out of the small river. Passing his pony, he went to the woman's horse, ready to take it in place of his own overworked mount.

Then he saw the bearded face that looked down on him from a steep bank on the far side of the river. Redmon did not think he would have time to stash his booty on the other horse before the man crossed over. With a cry of anguish, he was once again upon his pony, urging it on as best he could, as quickly as he could force it to move.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

The trapper had been in the hills for months, disdaining contact with his fellow men. If he needed to be reminded why, he had only to look upon the dying woman and know. He thought he recalled seeing her on his last journey to the post where he sold his furs. Tenderly, he cupped her lolling head in his hard hands, drew her lips close to his ear so that he could hear what she was mumbling to him. As he dipped his head, her words were clear.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Before night fell, on the ledge of a small village called Brun, the trapper caught up with Redmon. They fought, the trapper was cut. Redmon fled on foot — his pony had dropped dead of exhaustion just before — with the bag of gold weighing him down.

Although several folk witnessed the





fight, it was a youth, a red haired teen, who first went to the trapper to see if he were wounded as grievously as it appeared. The boy knelt beside the man to hear what it was he was chanting.

♦♦♦♦

**F**inally, Redmon could run no further. He had dropped the great pouch of gold a mile back, hoping that the boy would take it and be satisfied. But he came on, following even as the sun began to dip below the high ridges about them. Redmon left the trail he had found, stumbling over decaying logs that tripped him, over stones that found his toes and shins and toppled him time and again. He could not run, and the boy would not heed his threats.

**'With a cry of anguish, he was once again upon his pony, urging it on as best he could.'**

At last, Redmon turned, drunkenly, swaying on legs that seemed turned to water. The boy smashed him in the face with a staff, crushing Redmon's nose. He dropped, his fingers loose, the blade falling into the leaves. The boy kicked the knife aside and pulled Redmon to him, speaking.

Redmon heard, he listened to the words hissing, slicing into his ear, tunneling; telling him, telling him. The thief brought his head forward, looked into the boy's face, seeing those eyes of ice. He heard.

♦♦♦♦

**O**n the day of tithing, the farmer was happy to come to the temple to give. He was prepared and obliged to make his weekly offering. He waited in line as the folk moved slowly, filing past the bowl where the money accumulated like grains of wheat. Smiling, he thought of how little grain he and his fellows had harvested before the new temple came into the province. Now, the fields yielded much more than stones. Now, he and all the other peasants had more than enough to feed their families. Now, they could bag their grain and sell it to fat merchants from the cities, and they could give some of their excess to the temple.

True, their were rumours of certain practices the new priests engaged in on some nights when the moon glowed full and bright. But he didn't dwell too much upon that. He didn't care, so long as his fields continued to bear fruit in plenty.

It was his turn now, his time to toss coins into the bowl. The priest should be pleased with the silver he would put there. He looked at the holy man.

Strange, he mused. These priests never were what you would expect of such men. They rarely were what you'd expect. Still, this new one looked even stranger than the last — whipcord lean; more the build of guildsman thief than that of a priest.

But that icy gaze was the same.

# FICTION FILE 49

## TOM HOLT



**Did God wrangle with the planning department over the creation of the world? Tom Holt wonders, and Liz Holliday reports.**

**T**om Holt writes humorous fantasy that takes place where myths and everyday life collide.

It wasn't always so. Holt first wrote two sequels to the late E F Benson's *Lucia* books. 'I think it was a helpful way to start off writing, because if you can begin using somebody else's characters and style, it's marvellous,' says Holt. 'You can just go ahead and do the plot and the jokes. After two of those I was starting to get the confidence to actually think up people for myself, and that's when I started what I am writing now. I guess you would call them comic fantasies.'

'I never knew that was what they were until I'd written the second one. My publisher invited me to a launch party. I discovered they were selling them in the science fiction and fantasy section, and that opened my eyes. I thought: that's what I've been doing all these years! It was very helpful because it enabled me to see what genre I was operating in. It was always the kind of thing I wanted to write, because I wanted to write comedy but needed the extra dimension that writing fantasy would give me.'

His latest book, *Flying Dutch*, shows us what life might be like for someone who has lived from the 15th century to the present day. Julius Vanderdecker presents a threat to the world economy because of an ancient life insurance policy; his enemies are, of

course, accountants. And the way he smells. Then there is the invulnerable cat, the mad alchemist turned scientist who has invented everything in the world and the secret plot at the heart of Radio Three.

Writing like this requires a particular way of looking at things, says Holt. 'It depends on the way you see the world. For example, there are some myth makers — and I think that fantasy is making up your own myths — who say in the beginning was the Word, and they evolve a creation myth like that. I look at it a different way. I see that there was this void, and God came along and He thought it would be a nice place for a development — but how would it be if something went wrong with the planning permission? I'm not a particularly cheerful person, but I do see everything in comic terms. If you are going to write comedy, you have to have a different perspective.'

This is a perspective Holt allows Vanderdecker to share, making him a most memorable and believable character. 'There are people who, in the face of danger, will scream and be incoherent, there are people who will be brave and heroic and there are people who, because they are just as afraid as the people who are screaming, will make a joke. Some of the funniest jokes are black jokes or jokes about death.'

It is this which allows Vanderdecker to stay sane for several centuries. 'He had to be a certain kind of person. He had to be a person with a great sense of responsibility and be one of these people I'm talking about who, in the face of the intolerable, finds his way out by taking an absolutely comic viewpoint. Looking at things from the comic point of view is his safety valve. If he wasn't intrinsically a humorous person he would undoubtedly have gone mad and stayed mad.'

# ROACH MAN

## By Roy Westerman

I'm sitting here in the bedroom of the house writing these notes whilst there's still time. There's very little furniture in the room, just a table and chair. There are no shadows in the corners. The lights are very bright. There's a two-hundred and fifty watt bulb in the ceiling lamp. There's a wall light as well, and a couple of spotlights for good measure. No, it's not that my eyes are bad, as a matter of fact they're quite good. I can spot an insect crawling at fifty paces. Not that I need that sort of vision to see what's down there.

It will be in the house by now, in the basement, probably, planning its next move. What is? you're asking? When what's left of me is found you'll read this and you'll know. And I want you to know, because you're going to have to face it as well one day.

I've never liked them. Not since I was a kid, though I didn't think too much about it then. All kids play with insects. You know, cutting worms in half to see if both bits would live. Putting ants and earwigs in the same jar to see them fight. That got a bit boring after a while, the ants always won. Pity that. Earwigs make good mothers according to the books. The females that is.

Some kids used to pull flies' wings off and then watch them scurrying about wondering why the hell they weren't taking off. Pretty cruel, kids. I heard about some who'd stick a straw up a frog's rear end and blow down it till the damn thing exploded, never saw it done. Never wanted to. Still, insects and other animals are cruel. I mean, they eat each other alive don't they?

Stopped writing for a minute. Just heard a scraping noise like a chair rubbing along a wall, or maybe an insect's body scraping on the floor. You wouldn't hear that? You would if the insect was big enough. I don't know whether all of this sounds rational to you. Considering the position I'm in I should be scared senseless. Well I am, but even so there's a sort of logic to it all. Natural retribution and all that.

Anyway, as I was saying, insects and things have to eat so maybe they're not being cruel, not killing for the sake of it. Not like kids who kill and torture just for the hell of it. Animals only kill when they have to, according to some experts. Oh yeah? Well I've got news for them. It's all about to change. 'Cos they're after me. Not for food, though doubtless that's what I'll be if things go wrong.

What was that? Scraping sounds again. Furniture being pulled aside? Probably. Just remembered I didn't leave the light on in the basement. They don't usually like bright lights you know.

Put a light on sudden and watch them scatter. Mind you they're adaptable. Oh yes, they're certainly adaptable. Went to a zoo once. In the reptile house. There was this made-up waterhole, with a lizard near it half asleep. It was hot and humid and the lights were bright. Bright as a desert at mid-day. Didn't stop them though. One came out calm as you like, bright lights and all, and walked out, right out into the open. Shouldn't have done it mind, the lizard opened one eye, shot its tongue out and that was that. Shows how adaptable they are though.

And that one down there has adapted like no creature ever adapted before. I was in my twenties when a sort of hatred of them started to develop. I went to work for a firm that dealt in pest control, you know, rats, mice, fleas, bugs that sort of thing. They gave me basic training, like how to tell the difference between rat droppings and mouse droppings. How to look for bed bugs. How to kill off a wasp's nest without getting stung. It's a lot more interesting than you might think. A dealer in death, an exterminator. It was around this time that my obsession began.

You have to learn about insects. How they live, how they breed, what they eat and so on. All their revolting little habits. And that was when I really found out about cockroaches. Did I tell you this was all about cockroaches? No I don't think I did. Have you seen them? Crawling out from under a log, running for cover when you put the light on, crunching under your feet in the dark. Keeping so still sometimes, blending into the background so you put your hand right on them. Makes you squirm when they run over your hand. And the ultimate horror, when one drops down your neck and you can't get it out! I think that was the day I became a bit unhealed. Got him out eventually, nauseating little brute. Took him apart a bit at a time. Infante! Manic? Senseless? All of those probably, and maybe a few more. But I hate them. And they smell! Have you been in a building with a colony of them infesting it? Have you? Have you smelled them? Musty, foul disgusting. Breeding and fornicating in their thousands, in dark secret crevices, crawling over each other. Did you know the female lays a sort of shell, called an ootheca? With sixteen little ones inside. Sixteen! And poisons don't affect the shell. Sixteen little baby cockroaches, protected from our best insecticides. You have to allow for that when you're exterminating them. Exterminate! That's wishful thinking. You only kill a few. Hundreds maybe, or even thousands at one go. But that's only a few.

I killed more than most. Became an expert, a legend almost. I was even

contracted out to other organisations. Never let up on a job till every one was cleared from the building. Except you could never be sure. One, just one female, or one shell, and gradually they'd come back. Or they'd move back from a neighbouring building. I got well known. Made some money. But I wasn't happy. Couldn't kill 'em all you see. But I tried, God how I tried. I've got a million notches on my spray nozzle. And they know. They know! They think you see. They communicate. And they adapt. Do you know how many poisons have been used? Hundreds, and researchers have to keep coming up with different ones all the time. Newer and more complex. Then they adapt again, mutate until the poisons don't kill them any more. And what do they do when the lights are on all the time? THEY ADAPT. They get used to it. And what do they do when one man is killing them by the million, when they think they are really under threat? They adapt.

Have you heard the theory about the ant colony? That it isn't thousands of individuals living an ordered social existence, but one organism that consists of a number of different parts. Makes sense doesn't it? A creature the size of an ant can't have a thinking brain for God's sake. It is brain, a small part of a big brain, all acting as one.

Cockroaches are the same. I've realised that. Me. The Roach Man. I've watched them, I've fought them. I've seen sights you wouldn't believe, and wouldn't want to either. I've seen them getting bigger. Oh I know the American roach is bigger than ours, and there are some pretty large ones in the Middle East and Madagascar, but even so, still tiny compared to the British variety. British variety! That's a laugh. There isn't a British variety. Or there wasn't until now. All we had before were the German and Oriental types with a few American ones thrown in. But what's sitting down there is British all right, born and bred right here.

Yes, I saw them getting bigger. No one else saw them and I couldn't figure that out. Not at first. I saw them a foot long. A foot! Couldn't catch one, they were too crafty for that. I could have warned the world then. No poisons were strong enough for insects that size either, short of cyanide or strychnine, and they were too crafty for that as well. I thought at first it was the poisons that were changing them. But why only here? Why not elsewhere as well? It was a long time before I realized what was happening. It was me they were adapting to. Me! I was the deadliest threat they'd ever come up against. Sounds crazy doesn't it? I know, that's what I thought. But as I said there's a sort of logic to it. Something attacks you, you hit back, pausing to adapt first if you have to. Only this time it's a more abstract thing they've adapted to. Not a poison. Not a bright light you can see and feel, but a man. And that's a hell of a jump when you think about it. And you can't tell me that one cockroach figured that one out all on its own. No chance. Those colonies are all one. All thinking together. And it's probably bigger than that. A little bit of that brain is passed on every time a little baby comes wriggling out of that shell, and the bigger the cockroach the

bigger the brain. Get it?

**B**ut why now after several million years? I figured that one out as well. Because it wasn't necessary before. We killed in dozens, in hundreds, in thousands, even. But that didn't bother them, not seriously. But then I came along. The expert. The Roach Man, who killed by the million. And then they realised. IT realised. Survival might be possible with just one of me, but they latched on to the same thing I'm telling you about them. WE communicate as well, and soon there might be a lot more like me. That may not happen but they don't know that. They assumed it would happen and then they'd really be in trouble. So what do they do? Develop their own poisons? I suppose that's possible though I haven't seen any evidence of it. Attack me in numbers? I wondered about that for a long time. It would take a lot of them but it would be possible. My guess is they're thinking further ahead. Suppose they ganged up and tried to kill me off while they were still fairly small? It would be possible but it would take some doing. I'd run and dodge and let the world see. And if the world hit back, really hit back, they would still be small and vulnerable.

**B**y doing it now, the size they are, when the world does find out they will be bigger and stronger. Did you know that most insects are twenty times stronger than we are pound for pound? Some of them more. Imagine their strength when they're our size! Listen! It's pushing against the door now. It's just a matter of time until the lock gives way, or the hinges. Then we'll be face to face. Have you seen the face of a cockroach? Like something out of a horror film. Except this isn't a film. The door is breaking now. Almost time to stop writing and pick up my final weapon. After all our efforts I'm back to the oldest one in the book. Made it from an old garden weed killer. They may have come a long way in the last few years but there's one thing they can't beat. Fire! This may not kill it but it'll keep it away from me long enough for this cyanide pill to work. Ironical really that I should die from poison. Natural retribution again. A nasty death? Maybe, but better than a wrestling match with a cockroach the size of a car. And better than dying in the flames of this house. Because that's how I intend to kill this one.

These notes? Thought of that as well. Fireproof security box. It'll be found along with my remains when they sift through the ashes.

The door's gone now. Oh God the size of the thing. It's standing there, quite still now, looking at me. Its life purpose. Its race enemy. No time left now. Don't feel sorry for me. Feel sorry for yourselves.

**Roy Westernman** admits to being born during the war. This is his first published story and reflects some of the feelings engendered when doing pest control for a Local Authority. Occasional writing provides a refuge from insanity. He feels his main tasks in life are supporting his family and his building society!

# FICTION FILE 50

## JAMES LOVEGROVE

**Young novelist James Lovegrove embarked upon a literary career with a tale of moral decay on the high seas. He talks here to Mark Morris about joining the genre writers' clan.**

**J**ames Lovegrove's first novel, *The Hope*, took a mere six weeks to write. Set aboard a vast ocean liner, *The Hope* takes the form of a series of interlinked short stories which chronicle the lives (mostly miserable) of the ship's passengers. Considered as a whole, the stories constitute an allegorical novel which takes as its theme moral, social and physical decay. It is a powerful, unsettling and poignant debut, made all the more impressive when you consider that Lovegrove is just twenty-five years old.

His road to publication has been evily short. 'I've been very lucky,' he admits. 'When I left university I thought: Christ, I've got to get a job. The problem was I didn't want a job, and so as I'd had the idea for *The Hope* for a long time I decided to write it. When I'd finished, a friend took it to Macmillan's and they accepted it very quickly. So I was saved from becoming a chartered accountant.'

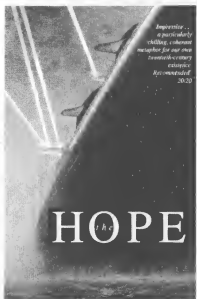
On its release, *The Hope* was hailed in literary circles and embraced by the horror/fantasy genre. How does Lovegrove regard his own work?

'I'd like to be regarded as a genre writer, though more as an eccentric cousin than a brother. I'm more interested in borderline material which cross-fertilises various genres than in pure horror fiction.'

And his influences? 'Within the genre I'd have to say Stephen King, Clive Barker and Ray Bradbury. William Gibson is excellent, as is Thomas Harris. Outside the genre, Philip Larkin is a major influence, and I love the grimy claustrophobic feel of some of Dickens' work. Who else? Yeats, Eliot — I think to some extent I've appreciated and learned from the way all these writers have handled language and mood at one time or another. I love the way you can trace lineage and descent through all these people, like pathways winding back through literature. It's exciting to see progressions and to actually feel part of the process.'

Lovegrove smiles wryly when I mention that some of the stories in *The Hope* are extremely dark and gruesomely explicit. Did he ever worry that perhaps the book was becoming too unpleasant?

'Yes, I felt that about two stories. There was the one about the priest who buggers little boys, and the one about the girl who saved her boyfriend's toenail clippings and ate them.' When asked why he handled the supernatural elements of the book in a detached, almost ambiguous way he replies: 'It was partly because the stuff that



### THE HOPE

Five miles long and one mile high, carrying a million passengers to a new promised land, the giant ship *Hope* was the billion-ton of a phantasmagorical dream. Yet a generation later land has not been sighted, it rises under her gaunt hull in the bow's sinister vaults, dark, deformed and old. With chilling imagination and blackest humour, James Lovegrove creates an unforgettable vision of a society that has lost its way.

Blood courses through the black like a river in spite but it is a tribute to Lovegrove's writing that it is always held within the limits of credibility. Lovegrove's controlled writing, the words as precise as an ancient bellows, is the book's best argument against the attacks of the ultra-short future that is 'deeper' to 'world' as this first and better effort.

The Sunday Times

As an allegory of late 20th-century capitalism, it catches ably the rise, waste and pretension of consumer society. I am glad to think, but the 1990s, will be dominated by the more of Mr Lovegrove's debut.

The Spectator

James Lovegrove has terrible sense, imagination and style and will surely make his mark.

She writes

The magnificent TIT (1991) provides a compelling force to make this book an evergreen and universal debut.

Five

definitely does happen is very grim and I didn't want to dilute that by making it part of the fantasy. Also, I wanted to create a kind of mythology among *The Hope's* passengers. I think in such a society there would be a great deal of rumour which would effectively constitute the birth of a new folklore. I wanted to try and get that across.'

What advice would Lovegrove give to other young writers trying to break into today's market? 'Think about chartered accountancy. No, no, I'm lying, it's a great job. I'd say make certain you know that this is what you want to do. And, most importantly, believe in yourself, believe that you're writing the best book that's ever been written and, who knows, eventually other people may start to believe with you.'

# FEAR REVIEWS

## WHEELER DEALERS

■ The Rollerboys, not to be 'Mist'



### PRAYER OF THE ROLLERBOYS

Starring Corey Haim, Patricia Arquette, Christopher Collet, Devin Clark  
Director Rick King  
Distributor First Independent  
Cert 15

A seemingly frivolous thriller about a neo-Nazi youth organisation, Corey Haim's latest theatrical headliner also contains serious messages about drugs, racism and sexism.

Life in 21st century America is on a constant downer. Japanese and German corporations run the government and street violence is on the increase — largely because the majority of the population live on the street. Enter the Rollerboys, a paramilitary cult run by Gary Lee (Collet), who get around on rollerblade skates. Despite their whiter than white image, the cult's main source of income is a drug called 'mist' which eventually turns addicts into lethargic non-entities.

It is the drugs that young pizza deliverer Griffin (Haim) is against. But he has no intention of getting involved with the Rollerboys until he rescues one of their number from a house fire and comes face to face with Lee. The cult king wants Griffin to join the gang, not least because of their friendship

at school when Griffin taught Lee to rollerskate.

Griffin does not want to get involved with his old pal, but the police force him to go undercover so that they can track down the source of 'mist'. Enter love interest Casey (Arquette) who quickly develops some on-off sexual chemistry with Griffin and acts as his police contact. Everything appears to be going swimmingly, though appearing a little tense, until Griffin's brother Mittle is introduced to 'mist' and poor Griffin is betrayed — twice. As Griffin penetrates the mobile drugs lab and prepares to deliver the evidence to an increasingly desperate police chief, Lee discovers his duplicity and tries to retrieve the situation.

The film's climax redresses my initial feeling that the rollerblades are a somewhat idiotic gimmick — I'm sure this film will resurrect last year's speed craze. Fast and fraught, with plenty of explosions and gunfire, *Prayer of the Rollerboys* provides first-rate entertainment both for girls, who are rapidly promoting Haim to sex godling status, and for guys, who will no doubt be impressed by the profusion of action sequences.

Despite a number of naff moments, I enjoyed *Prayer of the Rollerboys*. It is no doubt aimed at the teen and summer market and will do well on both counts.

John Gilbert



### FILM AND VIDEO



**HORROR**  
Beetlejuice  
The First Power



**FANTASY**  
Edward Scissorhands  
Nothing But Trouble



**SCIENCE FICTION**  
Prayer of the Rollerboys  
Blakes 7



**THRILLER**  
Whore  
Backdraft  
Poison  
A Kiss before Dying  
Hudson Hawk  
Stop at Nothing  
The Great Los Angeles  
Earthquake  
Whispers  
Midnight  
Taste of Hemlock  
Blood Moon

Excellent  
Very good  
Good  
Fair  
Poor

### CINEMA

#### NOTHING BUT TROUBLE

Starring Chevy Chase, Dan Aykroyd, John Candy, Demi Moore  
Director Dan Aykroyd  
Distributor Warner Bros  
Cert U



The cast list may be top-heavy with high-powered comedy actors, but Dan Aykroyd's directorial debut is nothing short of a mess.

It begins as a confusing road movie, without the benefits of Bing Crosby and Bob Hope. Manhattan stockbroker Chris Thorne (Chase) is BMWing toward a business meeting in Atlantic City. Sounds like *Bonfire of the Vanities*? No way. His travelling companions include Diane Lightstron (Moore), an ambitious attorney whom he is trying to impress, and the Brazillionaires, Fausto and Renalda Squirinisz, who are Thorne's current clients.



Taking an ill-advised detour, Thorne becomes lost amongst picturesque countryside in which all the towns have 19th century names. The little group stops at a place called Valkenvenia where the over-zealous and very strange sheriff (Candy) serves an arrest warrant and takes them to the local justice Alvin Valkenheiser (Aykroyd). He hates any kind of criminal and sentences them to death, but there are those in the town who want them to survive and this is where things get really weird.

John Candy swaps his sheriff's hat for a dress to play Valkenheiser's mute granddaughter. She, of course, falls for Thorne in a big way. And talking of big, Thorne is soon pestered by the attentions of The Infant Bodies, grotesque Sumo wrestler-shaped twins called Bobo and L'I Debbul who use old car wrecks to form fantastic sculptures. They, however, are nothing compared to Judge Valkenheiser's law enforcers Mr Bonestripper and Miss Gradertine who were born to kill criminals and have their eyes on Thorne, Diane and troupe.

You might think that this mix-and-match bag of tricks is fairly typical of Den Aykroyd films but, unlike *Dragnet* and the original *Ghostbusters*, *Nothing But Trouble* is embarrassing to watch. The humour is infantile, the characters just too way-out to sustain credibility and the direction is, to say the least, fragmented. Aykroyd has created a film that, like its central characters, does not know where it's going (and has only one audience in mind when it arrives). He may be a marvellous character actor but he has much to learn as a director.



## POISON

**Starring** Scott Renderer, Edith Meeks, Larry Maxwell, Susan Norman  
**Director** Todd Haynes  
**Distributor** Mainline  
**Cert** 18, 85 mins



In America, *Poison* has proved controversial, with moral majority representatives castigating the use of federal funding (through the National Endowment for



■ Nothing but trouble, heavy on infantile humour

the Arts) for the picture, which interweaves three storylines — a gay prison tale (*Home*), a black and white venereal horror pastiche (*Horror*) and a fake documentary (*Hero*) about a little boy's mysterious disappearance. Sad to report of a film that offended so many people I personally hate, it's still not very good, the intercutting of the stories suggesting not so much a thematic unity but an attempt to keep bored audiences interested enough to walk out.

Todd Haynes' last movie — suppressed by lawsuit — was *The Karen Carpenter Story*, which featured a cast of Barbie Dolls. This is equally strange, but never really ravs up, and you come away wondering why these three stories have been shuffled together. *FEAR* readers will probably be most interested in the movie satire, which is distantly modelled on *The Hideous Sun Demon* as an infected scientist spreads a leprosy-like disease

through personal contact and broods melodramatically, but it's neither very funny nor very offensive.

The documentary is the most negligible of the film's strands, coming a long way after *Zelig* in its format and not quite getting to the point by the end. The prison story has a '40s French setting but an aggressively American cast, and features several buggery and thuggery scenes that would be castigated for violence against women if they depicted heterosexual acts.

The film's various notable traits — its sexually explicit material, its juxtaposition of three styles, its occasional moments of real horror — all come across as rather pointless, and the overwhelming feel is of a genuine talent doodling while waiting for a real project to come along.

**Kim Newman**



■ *Home*, *Horror*, *Hero* or Salirical *Poison*

## WHORE

**Starring** Theresa Russell, Benjamin Mouton, Antonio Fargas  
**Director** Ken Russell  
**Distributor** Trimark  
**Cert** 18



From the opening shot of dyed-blond, stiletto-heeled prostitute Liz strutting her stuff among vomit and rubble beside a motorway underpass, accompanied by the graphic reggae lyrics of 'I Wanna Bang Har', *Whore* is out to shock. See Liz beaten, see Liz abused, see Liz perform kinky sex with a bored expression on her face. This is all rather at odds with Liz's to-camera ruminations on her past and hostile present — she condemns her lecherous clients, but the film seems to share their appetite for dark and dirty sex. Attempts at humour are tainted with an ugly schoolboyishness, disturbingly suggesting that we should be laughing at, rather than with, lost Liz.

With director Ken Russell typically short on subtlety, this adaptation from David Hines' stage play *Bondage* never

■ Antonio Fargas and Theresa Russell in *Whore*



loses its theatrical origins. Worse, Liz fails to develop her own identity, despite Theresa Russell's whole-hearted performance. Instead, her problems are an amalgam of stereotypical 'tart with a heart' crisis-points: no real home, child taken into care, seduced by a pimp who exploits her while all she really wants is to be loved. The stylised direction also distances us from Liz's grim reality and it's impossible to be truly afraid for her. The scenes in which she is assaulted by her pimp Blaka (Benjamin Mouton), are particularly stilted.

The conclusion of Liz's philosophising, that her clients 'don't want sex, they want revenge', may be psychologically valid, but is hardly original and is hammered home with as much blunt vulgarity as the title itself.

Phillip Blenkinsop



## BACKDRAFT

**Starring** Kurt Russell, William Baldwin, Scott Glenn, Robert de Niro, Donald Sutherland, Jennifer Jason Leigh  
**Director** Ron Howard  
**Distributor** UIP  
**Cert** 18



THE title refers to a freak phenomenon that occurs when flames consume all the oxygen within an enclosed space, leaving only unburned gases. When the most minute amount of oxygen is re-introduced, the results are catastrophic — namely an explosive inferno. Unpredictable, deadly, like a natural time bomb. Firemen dread it.

Brothers Stephen and Brian McCaffrey come from a fire-fighting dynasty. Their father and uncles have all worn the uniform of the Chicago fire service. Continuing the tradition, Stephen (Russell) is an officer, his sibling (Baldwin) a rookie in his command. The plot hinges on a series of fatal fires, seemingly linked with the mayoral election campaign of a prominent city official whose cost-cutting policies have resulted in a reduction in fire service staffing levels.

Investigator Rimgale (de Niro) is convinced arson is the cause, but his search for conclusive evidence proves futile. After a visit to an incarcerated ageing pyromaniac (Sutherland), de Niro ascertains the secret of the backdrafts but is hospitalised attempting to apprehend the culprit. It's Baldwin,



# CUTTING EDGE



## EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

**Starring** Johnny Depp, Winona Ryder, Dianne Wiest, Alan Arkin, Vincent Price  
**Director** Tim Burton  
**Distributor** Twentieth Century Fox



Tim Burton is one of cinema's visionary talents, and this — a surreal and neat variation on the Frankenstein theme — is indubitably his masterpiece. Edward, played with remarkable poetic lyricism by Johnny Depp, is the unfinished creation of an inventor — a brief but poignant cameo from Vincent Price — who dies of a heart attack before his greatest work is completed. Left with shears instead of hands, but versed in poetry and etiquette, the pasty-faced, tousled-haired Edward lives alone in his deceased master's Gothic hilltop castle.

That is until kindly Avon lady Peg Boggs (Dianne Wiest) comes calling. Straying from her usual route, she discovers Edward and adopts him, introducing this benign creature to her home, family — husband Bill (Alan Arkin), daughter Kim (Winona Ryder), son Kevin (Robert Oliveri) — and bizarre coterie of friends. Edward rejuvenates their mundane existence with his wild topiaries — dinosaurs, dolphins — and outlandish hairdressing styles for pets and owners alike. But, as with *Beetlejuice*, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* and *Batman*,

Burton displays a darker side: a nympho neighbour tries to seduce Edward; Ryder's jock boyfriend (Anthony Michael Hall) coerces him into crime. Edward's downfall is hauntingly inevitable.

Teen heart-throb Depp brings a touching dignity to a difficult, near silent role, wearing his ungainly shears with brio — implements that are by turns exotic, artistic and 19th. The ambiguity they represent Burton fuels by having us first laugh at his comic antics — sleeping on a waterbed, dressing himself, his topiaries — then having him draw blood with his blades in an effort to console a distressed child. Edward's face is a mass of scars, all self-inflicted.

In Burton's dreamscape image is all-important, logic is dispensed early: you buy into Edward's world or you don't. Burton paints a picture magical and wondrous, poignant and intimate. While there are moments where in lesser and less imaginative hands than Burton's the tone would have turned to pap, the onscreen rapport between real-life lovers Depp and Ryder gives the film an emotional core, a passionate edge. *Edward Scissorhands* may not be flawless — the climax is too reminiscent of the belt-tower finale from *Batman* — but it's very nearly the best thing ever. See it and weep. Then see it again. Pure genius.

**Mark Salisbury**



therefore, who is forced to confront the uncomfortable truth behind the killer's identity.

Scripted by Highlander writer and former fireman Gregory Widen, *Backdraft* is an anthralling mix of blistering action and predominantly macho posturing. Russell attempts leading man status, but is upstaged by de Niro. And even de Niro can't compete with the seductive, monstrous allure of fire, presented as a living predatory entity whose voracious appetite cuts a destructive passage through buildings and lives alike. The fire effects, courtesy of Industrial Light & Magic, are awesome indeed and Howard's 'in yer face' direction infects the film with an all-too-palpable sense of realism and menace.

Mark Salisbury



## HUDSON HAWK

Starring Bruce Willis, Danny Aiello, Andie MacDowell  
Director Michael Lehmann  
Distributor Columbia Tri-Star



The third film from director Michael Lehmann (after *Heathers* and *Meet The Applegates*) — and his first with any kind of sizeable budget — is a blissfully anarchic affair that fuses together the best of Lehmann's unconventional and irreverent dark spirit with Willis and producer Joel Silver's apixious blockbusting tendencies. The result is a \$40 million cult movie that, while erratically and occasionally incomprehensibly plotted, displays a fresh wit, off-beat humour and a marked sense of invention.

Bruce Willis is Hudson Hawk, 'the world's greatest cat burglar', and barely tasting freedom after 10 years of Sing-Sing, when he is coerced into accepting a job for the mob, stealing a priceless bronze statue sculpted by Leonardo da



■ Top flight action for Hudson Hawk

Vinci. Before you can whisper Mona Lisa, Hawk's up to his neck in all manner of nefarious double dealings involving ruthless psychotic husband and wife millionaires Darwin and Minerva Mayflower (Richard E Grant and Sandra Bamhard), and a plot to reconstruct da Vinci's legendary gold machine. The machine's vital component, however, is a crystal, split into three by da Vinci and hidden within three priceless objects — da Vinci's sketchbook, his prototype helicopter and the aforementioned statue. Hawk is the man the Mayflowers designate to steal them. On his tail are a band of CIA

operatives led by James Coburn, plus the Vatican in the shapely shape of Sister Andie MacDowell.

Written by Daniel (Heathers) Waters and *Die Hard*'s Steven E de Souza, from a story by Willis, *Hudson Hawk* bears witness to its conflicting sources in its chaotic structure, but the cross-pollination of influences succeeds for the most part admirably. There's a lavish attention to detail in design and execution. Willis breezes through his role with much the same care-free charm that made David Addison in *Tv's Moonlighting* so appealing — singing, quipping and grinning. It's an effortless,

■ Max Von Sydow and Matt Dillon, father and son-in-law in *A Kiss before dying*

delightful performance, hard to resist and hugely entertaining — as indeed is the film — especially during moments such as when he and Aiello croon Crosby's *Swinging On A Star* while skateboarding through the corridors of a museum. They're a double act worth forking out for.

Mark Salisbury



## A KISS BEFORE DYING

Starring Matt Dillon, Sean Young, Max Von Sydow, Diane Ladd  
Director James Dearden  
Distributor UIP  
Cert 16, 92 mins



Dwarfed by the summer's more flamboyant serial killers, Matt Dillon's Jonathan Corliss has a traditional cold-hearted-murderer-with-a-pretty-face approach. Obsessed with big-shot industrialist Thor Carlsson (Max Von Sydow) Corliss decides that the best way to get to his cash is by marrying one of his daughters. He's been dating Dorothy Carlsson but when her unplanned pregnancy threatens her inheritance Corliss drops her (from a great height) and takes up with her 'in sister Ellen, also played by Sean Young. Although their marriage gives Corliss a foothold in the Carlsson empire Ellen's suspicions grow, as does the body-count...

Even when freshly scrubbed there's something dirty about Matt Dillon and Corliss' murderous pragmatism is surprisingly believable. All the same, Dillon is strangely distanced from the action: maybe it's the untidy editing or just that his angst-ridden image overloads a superficially wholesome character. Young, meanwhile, is pale and dignified without being wiry, more at home than in last year's dire *Wings of the Apache*.

James Dearden, denied final cut by Universal on this his second feature as writer-director, supplies Hitchcock references aplenty, in keeping with a straightforward thriller narrative that is firmly stuck in the past despite a contemporary setting. Sharp pacing covers most of the story's leaps of faith, but the film never quite satisfies on a psychological level: a touch of *A Zed and Two Noughts*-ishness in the twin





relationship might have done the trick. If never entirely convincing, *A Kiss Before Dying* is largely entertaining.  
Philip Binko



## RENTAL VIDEO

### STOP AT NOTHING

**Starring** Veronica Hamel, Lindsay Frost, Annabella Price, Robert Desiderio, Caroline McWilliams, Joseph Hacker, Deborah Anne Gorman  
**Director** Chris Thompson  
**Distributor** First Independent  
**Cert** 15, 94 mins



We've come a long way since movie bad guys were distinguished from movie good guys by the colour of their stetsons. Nowadays, we're used to sophisticated characterisation, murderers with winning ways and golden smiles who disarm us with charm right up until the moment of truth (see Jeff Bridges, *Jagged Edge*).

It's much more thrilling if we're kept guessing. And that's why I was disappointed to recognise *Stop at Nothing's* villain James Howard (Robert Desiderio) practically the instant he cast a lecherous eye over glamorous private eye Parish (Lindsay Frost) in an opening scene.

The film — based on a couple's ugly court battle over their small daughter — loses out on suspense because of this, but nevertheless proves very watchable. The excellent Veronica Hamel steals the show as Annette Forbes who volunteers to kidnap the child to prevent her being further molested by her father, and it's Hamel who keeps up the tense pace as she and her colleagues pit their wits against the police in a desperate effort to keep the girl hidden.

Though never nail-biting, edge-of-seat stuff, *Stop at Nothing* is cleverly-structured and admirably acted. Its disturbing message alone — that the law cannot always be relied upon to safeguard children from abuse within the family — makes it compelling, if disconcerting, viewing.

Liz Roseblade



### THE GREAT LOS ANGELES EARTHQUAKE

**Starring** Joanne Kerns, Dan Laurie, Lindsay Frost, Joe Spano  
**Director** Larry Elikann  
**Distributor** Capital Home Video  
**Cert** 15 90 mins



Dr Claire Winslow (Kerns) is a highly-regarded seismologist who, along with her band of scientists, develops a surefire way to detect earthquakes. When she discovers the beginnings of tremors beneath LA, Dr Winslow is faced with the decision to either inform the authorities and face a mass panic if she is wrong, or to ignore the signs and risk the city being decimated. She decides to inform the city officials who after great deliberation agree to an evacuation.

The news is very soon leaked to a disreputable reporter called Kevin



■ Blood Moon, I think I'll have pickled onions

Conrad who broadcasts it to the public. This understandably causes an hysterical reaction amid which the earthquake hits and trashes everything and everyone in its path.

*The Great Los Angeles Earthquake* is your typical TV movie that is shown on a Saturday afternoon for the non-sports fans. The actors, if not household names, are familiar, so like me you can sit with your friends and say things like 'oh look, it's whatsit from thingy'. The general level of acting is very good. The only slight moan I do have is the length of time it takes for the earthquake to hit, although the quake effects are very

good. In short *The Great Los Angeles Earthquake* is worthy of rental, especially in order to play 'spot the actor'.

Mark Caswell



### BLOOD MOON

**Starring** Leon Lissek, Christine Amor, Ian Williams, Helen Thompson  
**Director** Alec Mills  
**Distributor** Capital  
**Cert** 18, 90 mins



Caroco. The name of this film production company stands for quality product such as *Total Recall* and *Terminator*. So how could

they have produced such a cheap shot exploitation movie as *Blood Moon*?

They must have had a few afternoons to spare when they came up with the idea of a vicious killer hunting down banking students in the woods behind an Aussie girls' convent school. Early in the film, the large cast of big-breasted girls, who are a mixture of Australian and American students, are paired off with loud-mouthed local lads from Oz. One by one they find their way into the woods when the moon is full and red, at which point the anonymous slasher has his wicked way with a barbed wire noose.

Cliché follows cliché with the introduction of fearful nun, policeman with bad-ass attitude upfront but heart of gold beneath and headmaster's wife who screws anything in trousers but prefers pretty boys — again with big mouths.

Writer Robert Brennan has tried to create an unusual ending, but after a final student encounter with the killer, who is then seriously injured but manages to stumble off into the dark, the story unravels with melodramatic mediocrity — yes, I didn't think there was such a thing until I'd seen this film.

If the good of days of the killer on campus still appeal to you, *Blood Moon* might satiate your perverse need. But might I suggest that you go and watch one of the many other K on C films that are now coming out budget video and sum up the sub-game much more effectively.

John Gilbert



### MIDNIGHT

**Starring** Lynn Redgrave, Tony Curtis, Steve Parrish, Frank Gorshin, Wolfman Jack  
**Director** Norman Thaddeus Vane  
**Distributor** Braveworld  
**Cert** 15, 82 mins



Someone should tell Lynn Redgrave that she is slumming as well as hamming in this torturous tale which is described by the people at Braveworld as 'A Devilish Comedy'.

■ Oh look, it's 'whatsit' and 'thingy' amid the rubble of the Earthquake







There are enough weighty clichés to kill a pink elephant. Redgrave over-acts as the appalling Midnight, a chat show hostess with just a little bit of Elvira in her. Her show is a raging hit (this is fiction, after all) and Mr B (Curtis), the boss of the network, wants the copyrights. Midnight wants to retain her property and, despite B's heavy-handed tactics, manages to keep a hold thanks to her major-muscled, bike riding, toy boyfriend Mickey (Parrish) and her weird German butler.

Mr B's spite knows no bounds. Despite high ratings, he closes Midnight's show and uses a budding starlet to seduce Mickey away from her. Isolated, she might just be persuaded to sign. But that's when the murders begin.

Unpromising from the first words Ms Redgrave utters in her coffin, Midnight is the first C movie I've ever seen. Its ineptitude will become legendary, its humour a joke in itself. If you see it of your local stockist, cross to the other side of the shop.

John Gilbert



## FEAR

**Starring** Ally Sheedy, Lauren Hutton, Michael O'Keefe  
**Director** Rockne S O'Bannon  
**Distributor** Vestron  
**Cert** 18, 83 mins

Cayce Bridges is a young woman with psychic powers. The film begins in 1985 when Cayce — still at high school — helps to catch a psycho who has kidnapped a young girl. By touching an object that has been held by someone Cayce can almost read that person's mind.

We then jump forward four years to the present. Cayce is plugging her new book on a TV show, but on her way out of the studio she sees a news item concerning a brutal murder. She promptly contacts the police and offers to help their investigation. The killer, nicknamed "Shadow Man", has scrawled on a wall in the victim's blood the message "Fear Me".

At the scene of the murder Cayce forms a mental link with the victim, but has a strong impression that the killer knows she is there. This is confirmed when Shadow Man mentally takes her on his next killing spree — he is also a psychic and a very good one at that. A cat-and-mouse chase carries on between the two until the final showdown at the local funfair.

Ally Sheedy as the mentally tortured psychic is absolutely brilliant. The



tension really has you sitting on the edge of your seat and biting your fingernails. The ending is a bit of a damp squib but thankfully doesn't ruin the rest

of the film. Rent *Fear* now and get ready to hide behind the sofa.

Mark Caswell



## TASTE OF HEMLOCK

**Starring** Randy Harrington, Eric Tynan Young, Anne Elizabeth Ramsay, Reed Armstrong,  
**Director** Geoffrey Darwin  
**Distributor** Braveworld  
**Cert** 15, 89 mins



Claud Thatch hasn't got much of a life, earning meagre wages as a waiter in a dingy, dirty restaurant to pay the rent for his dingy, dirty bedsit. But he spots a card on a laundrette noticeboard, advertising a leather jacket for sale, and decides to treat himself. The owner, James Hutton, invites him to view the jacket, with the proviso he arrives at 11 o'clock sharp. The shadowy apartment is empty when Claud gets there but his flamboyant host soon appears.

The jacket is perfect. Unfortunately, it's much too expensive for Claud, but as he's about to leave two of James' friends arrive, Barry and Barbara, 'the twins'. They convince James to let Claud pay for the jacket by weekly

# PSYCHIC SHOCKER



## THE FIRST POWER

**Starring** Lou Diamond Phillips, Jeff Kober  
**Director** Robert Resnikoff  
**Distributor** Warner Home Video  
**Cert** 18, 90 mins



*Shocker* meets *The Omen* as serial killer Patrick Channing (Kober) plays a very strange game of tag with detective Russell Logan (Phillips).

The Satan-worshipping son of a bitch has traded in his soul for three powers. In reverse order, the third is that he can be anywhere, the second is that he can be anyone and the first is immortality, which comes in very handy when you have a date with the electric chair.

Channing is eventually tracked down by Logan with the help of a psychic who warns him not to

press for the death sentence. But the prosecutor's office is determined to make an example of the mass murderer and he soon quick-fries.

That appears to be the end of the matter for the police, but the psychic is sure Channing will be back and Logan begins to believe her when things start to go badly wrong. Only a sacred crucifix dagger can save him from the supernatural killer.

Although *First Power* hangs on two well-worn plot crutches, the story provides a different slant on the slasher-killer type of movie. Although Lou Diamond Phillips is the headline star, Jeff Kober's sometimes manic, sometimes humorous portrayal of Patrick Channing is a performance worth watching.

*First Power* has taken a year to show up for release, and then only on video. Don't make a mistake and miss it.

John Gilbert



institutions, thus forging a commitment to the strange, intimidating trio.

The odds are stacked against *Taste Of Hemlock* becoming a successful rental (and later, sell-through) video. Its title is taken from the book *Claud* is writing, has no relevance to the story and implies a witchcraft horror movie, which *Taste Of Hemlock* certainly is not. More importantly, buying a second-hand jacket isn't one of the most thrilling occurrences and is unlikely to grab potential viewers: the poor copywriter has thrown 'erotic' (a gross exaggeration) and 'nightmare' into the blurb but doesn't stand a chance of making *Taste Of Hemlock* sound interesting.

A pity, as it has one of the best constructed and executed plots I've seen in months. *Claud*'s character is quickly and effectively brought to life, with time enough for a few cynical asides, then it's straight to the meeting with James. Hatton is a quirky, elegant chatterbox, a modern-day Noel Coward, and is instantly appealing to both *Claud* and viewer — which proves he's up to no good.

Most scenes are lengthy and reliant on dialogue but the film never becomes tiresome. Pacing is flawless and the only impediment to the plot are the endless weakly-lit sets.

The bizarre world of Hatton's clique is intriguing to explore and, through *Claud*'s experiences, can be seen through the eyes of both hunter and bewitched prey. Though, like *Claud*, you'll never know exactly what's going on, you'll be dragged through the film eager for peace but hungry for knowledge. And if the coat fits... Warren Lapworth



## WHISPERS

**Starring** Victoria Tennant, Jean Le Clerc, Chris Sarandon  
**Director** Douglas Jackson  
**Distributor** 20/20 Vision  
**Cert** 18, 90 mins



Dean R Koontz may be very happy. The jinx that seems to have haunted many a film based on his books has not cast this one as a creative disaster.

Keeping closely to the novel, the movie proffers an odd combination of stars. Victoria Tennant takes on the fraught role of glamorous romance writer Hilary Thomas who is attacked by Bruno Clavel, a fruit grower she recently interviewed for her new book. The police do not believe her story but kindly Sergeant Tony Clemenza tells Hilary to change the locks at her house and gives her his work number in case she feels threatened.

She is attacked again, this time in her own apartment, but after a monumental struggle she apparently kills Clavel with a knife. But after a brief respite, he returns with an even bigger chip on his shoulder and knife in his hands. The question is, how can a man return from the dead? Koontz has a thoroughly plausible explanation which, after the chills and intense suspense, rounds off an almost perfect thriller.

*Whispers* would have worked well as a theatrical release. The tension is incredible and on the big screen would guarantee more than a few jump moments for audiences. That said, it also works well on video and is the most impressive Koontz film to date.

John Gilbert



## BUY VIDEO

### BEETLEJUICE CARTOONS VOL ONE

**Director** Robin Budd  
**Distributor** Warner  
**Cert** U, 45 mins, £10.21



Although the production scheduling of the new *Beetlejuice* movie hangs in the balance — see last issue of *FEAR* — the Geffen film company has rightly jumped on the bandwagon built from the success of the first wacky film and started a similarly successful cartoon series. The first three episodes are *Critter Stories*, *The Big Face Off* and *Skeletons in the Closet*. Each stars the ghost with the most with a host of new friends not seen in the movie. And you can be sure that every episode is top notch as Tim Burton is co-executive producer.

John Gilbert



### DOOMWATCH

**Starring** John Paul, Simon Oates, Robert Powell, John Nolan, Paul Edgington  
**Director** Paul Ciappessoni, Terence Dudley, Jonathan Alwyn  
**Distributor** BBC Video  
**Cert** PG 90 mins, 102 mins £10.21



*Doomwatch* is the codename given to a semi-secret government department which, under the leadership of Dr Quist, keeps a close eye on potentially hazardous scientific research. And you can be damned sure that in each episode some potential disaster will arise, as in *'The Plastic Eaters'* in which a man-made virus that can melt plastic escapes from a top security research station. It's up to the *Doomwatch* team to avert further disaster after a jet plane is destroyed by the microscopic villains. And a problem of a larger nature arises in *'Tomorrow, The Rat'* when genetically engineered

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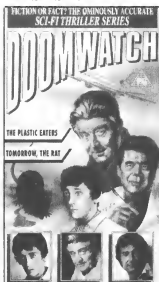
rodents escape and start eating people (James Herbert eat your heart out).

Sound is the problem in *'The Red Sky'* when an experiment in sonics develops a noise that can kill. And finally in *'You Killed Toby Wren'* poor old Robert Powell kicks the proverbial bucket when trying to disarm a nuclear device. Dr Quist is attacked on all fronts for allowing one of his employees to do such a stupid thing and so the days of

*Doomwatch* seem numbered. Before watching these videos I'd never even heard of *Doomwatch*, which is strange — as it's from the days of my youth I'm puzzled that I don't remember it. Watching the episodes now they seem very dated, although the scientific subjects they cover are believable. At least it makes up for the terrible dress sense of the time (flared trousers, cravats and sideburns ahoy). Not bad,



but this may be more for *Doomwatch* fans than the uninitiated.  
Mark Caswell



## BLAKES 7

**Cassettes Seven and Eight**  
Starring Gareth Thomas, Sally Knyvette, Paul Darrow,  
Michael Leeming, David Jackson  
Director Vere Lorrimer, Jonathan Wright Miller,  
George Spenton Foster  
Distributor BBC Video  
Cert PG 102, 103 mins £10.21



The adventures of Rog Blake and the crew of the Liberator continue in these two new offerings out from BBC videos. As usual, the gang are up to their necks in trouble as Servalan and Travis are after their blood.

In 'Orac' the crew of the Liberator meets up for the first time with the perplex box filled with wires, transistors and a highly intelligent positronic brain. Orac is residing on the planet Aristo when Blake and Co decide to grab the computer before the Federation get their hands on it. But things go badly wrong when Blake finds that it is already in Servalan's hands and the Liberator crew is captured. They escape in time for the second episode on this tape, only to walk straight into trouble again.

'Redemption' sees the crew under attack from mysterious forces — after a fierce battle the Liberator is badly damaged and unless Blake can come up with a cunning plan they will all die (cue dramatic music).

Cassette Eight kicks off with 'Shadow' in which Blake seeks the help of the Terra Nostra, a dangerous criminal organisation which illegally distributes a drug called Shadow. He soon finds himself arrested, but escapes to the planet Zonda to find the link between the Federation and Shadow. In the final episode 'Weapon' the Federation have constructed two weapons, the IMIPAK, which can kill at the touch of a button, and a clone of Blake. The IMIPAK's creator has legged it, pursued by Blake and co (and the Federation) and Blake finally comes face to face with himself.

I've always liked *Blakes 7*. Despite the odd weakly-plotted episode, the series as a whole is one of the all-time BBC classics. Miss these latest two cassettes at your peril.

Mark Caswell



## BOOKS



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**Fear**  
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**Gridlock**  
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## RAISING THE STONES

**Sheri S Tepper**  
**Publisher Grafton**  
**Format HB, £14.99**



Strange gods, colourful characters and a haunted land; all themes have been explored by Sheri Tepper, but her new book clothes them in new images and moulds them with startling new ideas.

Maire Manone is an exile from the harsh land of Voorstord where a strict patriarchal religion which believes in conflict and domination holds sway.

Her new home is Hobbs Land, a beautiful farm settlement where a now extinct ultra-intelligent race, the Owlbit, once used to live and where they

worshipped their strange and apparently now forgotten god. This land has been cultivated by human settlers who keep alive the memory of the Owlbit and their mysterious old god for reasons which seem to be ingrained in the land and in the hidden parts of their minds.

It is here that Maire tries to forget the Voorstord regime, but it does not want to forget her and plans an invasion of Hobbs Land which will serve as a prelude to the greater enslavement of humanity.

Tepper has provided first-class entertainment with books such as *The Awakeners* and, just recently, *Grass*. She has also produced science fiction such as *The Gate to Women's Country* which more overtly examines contemporary, and controversial, issues within an SF framework. She combines both talents in *Raising the Stones*, merging an examination of the very origin of myth with an entertaining adventure story. Tepper proved long ago that she is not a one-book wonder. Each new novel is ingenious and provocative, and she shows no signs of stopping. She is one of the few SF writers who deserve to be on the national bestseller lists.

John Gilbert



## FANTASY TALES

**Edited by Stephen Jones and David Sutton**  
**Publisher Robinson Publishing**  
**Format PB, £2.95**



An update on the only regular British paperback/magazine combination worth reading, which this issue incorporates a slightly different format.

The letters have been dropped in favour of a shorter Caudron piece which now appears at the front of the book. It is followed by the FT Forum which is modestly filled by Clive Barker going on about his favourite books and reiterating a fact long-known by genre fans, that genre boundaries are blurring. The Forum provides an interesting insight into the type of fiction that Clive was interested in during his formative years, but offers no surprises or shocks...



And so to the fiction which, as usual, provides the pulling power of *Fantasy Tales*. The established writers this time around are R Chetwynd-Hayes, with an SF meets horror meets Lovecraft story called *The Monster*, Kim Newman, whose sense of humour gets worse with the ticking of the clock, Thomas Ligotti, who plays antiquarian in more than one way with *The Spectacles in the Drawer*, Logan's Run author William F Nolan playing at gender and race change in *Gobbie, Gobbie* (look out for his interview in this issue of *FEAR*) and (by far my favourite here) Neil Gaiman, who takes to the path of tall tales with a

disgusting, venerated, little number called *Foreign Parts*.

The god of commercially satisfied, FT then continues with a series of stories from those talents who aren't quite in the news or the Stephen King publicity bracket. Notables in this volume include the FT debut of Janet Fox with a fantasy novella which is reminiscent, in story form if not style, of *Tamlin Lee*, and another deb Marvin Kaye, with an interesting SF time puzzle.

The standard is as high as ever but there is a noticeable lack of first-timers in this issue. I hope that the editors are not letting this part of their brief slip. It would be a shame as there are already enough closed anthologies and brand name collections on the market.

John Gilbert



## FLYING DUTCH

**Tom Holt**  
**Publisher Orbit**  
**Format HB, £12.95**



The jacket announces that *Flying Dutch* justifies author Tom Holt's place as a leading writer of humorous fiction. Well, I don't know about that. Sure, there are funny notions within the text but the difficulty is the story. Not that it's bad, it's very good — intriguing in fact — and therein lies the 'problem'. The reader, and perhaps Mr Holt, can become so wrapped up in the plot that the funnies seem to pass by.

The storyline brings Cornelius Vanderdecker (the Flying Dutchman) into a modern world. The Flying Dutchman is a captain, originally from the 14th century who, having drunk an alchemist's brew, is immortal. Fine enough, except for the side effect of a penetrating smell which emanates from Vanderdecker and his immortal crew for seven years at a time, with only a few moments' breathing space in between.

Being sea-bound for seven consecutive years makes tracking down an antidote somewhat difficult. Cue a series of adventures, bizarre coincidences and characters including a BBC firm crew, the alchemist, a member of the National Lombard Bank with no sense of smell who attempts to relieve Vanderdecker of his life assurance policy (before it causes the collapse of the world's economy) and a small, yet immortal, cat.

Once you've waded through the first 30 pages or so, which are pretty dull, the story takes a grip and it's full of amusing situations if little to actually titillate about. Entertaining enough for the best part of its 304 pages (the end's great, though) *Flying Dutch* is more of a 'worth reading' than a 'must buy'.

Richard Eddy



## YOU'LL NEVER EAT LUNCH IN THIS TOWN AGAIN

**Julia Phillips**  
**Publisher Heinemann**  
**Format HB £15.99**



What's *FEAR* doing reviewing this fuck-and-tell Hollywood autobiography? Well, of the measly five films Julia Phillips actually got to produce during her 20-year bout

of conspicuous consumption, one was the genre classic *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, and another was the masterpiece *Taxi Driver*, arguably the best horror film of the '70s and probably the best film all-round of that decade. Plus, her book does deal with such major genre names as Steven

Spielberg, with whom she had a major falling-out, and Anne Rice, who rates as Phillips' best friend and whose vampire books she has long been trying to film.

You've probably already heard about the many out-of-school stories Phillips tells and the way she has best-sellingly bad-mouthed everyone she's ever worked with, or even met — Goldie Hawn ('dirty hair'), Francois Truffaut ('prick') etc. However, she does finally put in print a long-current rumour that Marvin Gaye killed his girlfriend with a claw-hammer, plus a great Hollywood asshole story about a deal for *The Last Temptation of Christ* that nearly fell through because the owners of the property were arguing about sequel rights (It's not called *The Next-to-Last Temptation...*).

However, in order to get to all these juicy bits you have to wade through 620 pages of gimmicky prose and stay interested for more than is physically possible in the Phillips' cocaine habits, disgust with less-than-perfect physical specimens, relentlessly supercilious mean-spiritedness and self-justifying twaddle. You also come away noticing that Phillips didn't do all that much on *Taxi Driver* and that, although it was a big hit and a success, *Close Encounters*, in any of its cuts, is a dramatically lop-sided and out-of-control movie, suggesting perhaps that shoving half of Columbia up your nose while heading up a 20-million-buck operation isn't that good an idea.

Kim Newman



## THE COMPLETE MASTERS OF DARKNESS

Edited by Dennis Etchison  
Publisher Underwood-Miller  
Format HB £40.00



In recent years, anthologies consisting of new, original stories have been the rule not the exception. While this is wholly commendable (especially for bringing new blood into the genre), it also often means that the latest anthology won't be showcasing a tale by a Ray Bradbury, a Richard Matheson, or a Robert Bloch. Not to mention the best-selling 'brand-names' in the field such as King, Koontz, or Barker. Few of them can afford to write in this medium any more.

Fortunately, editor Dennis Etchison (an award-winning short story writer himself) has used his reputation to obtain contributions which these famous authors believe are among their best (but which have been overlooked by critics, or just not reprinted recently). Etchison has deftly compiled no fewer than three volumes of *The Masters of Darkness* (available in paperback from Tor Books), which the American specialty publisher Underwood-Miller has now gathered into a single massive hardcover for the serious collector.

In either format, the book/series is well worth the investment. Not only does Etchison bring back into the spotlight fine stories by all the authors mentioned above (45 in total), he also offers rare or choice stories by Ramsey Campbell, Nigel Kneale, James Herbert,



# TOMFOOLERY

## PHULE'S COMPANY

Robert Asprin  
Publisher Century  
Format PB, £5.99



It's about time someone decided that humorous fantasy/SF did not have to include discs, death and disaster — funny though they are — and that military science fiction was ripe for lampoon.

As with all good humour, *Phule's Company* targets no one series of books, but you can see the parallels with many a recent release. Captain Willard Phule — Fool — is a military commander whose career gets no further than the starting post when he is summoned back to command for court martial by, amongst others, the infamously rotund Captain Humpty. He is accused of being able to instil disobedience and his betters want to intern him in the stockade. But, before sentence is passed, one then thinks of a more odious punishment: to ship him off to Omega Crew, a military company in which all the no-hopers are dumped.

Sentence is passed and Phule is left to manage a space crew which includes such wonderful characters as Super Gnat, a microscopic lady legionnaire who can get violent if you call her petite, Brandy, a bullish Amazonian first sergeant, the warthog-faced alien Tusk-Anini and the chronicler of their adventure Beeker, who also acts as Phule's butler.

Omega Company becomes a talking point within the Space Legion, a legendary crew whose suc-



cess in space and combat is more to do with ineptitude than anything else. The Legion is of secondary importance to the Regular Army but Phule's exploits make the members of this elite band somewhat envious. This first book is about the forming of the Omega Company only, but I would guess that there are many more tribulations in store for Captain Phule and his incredible crew.

Asprin knows how to make me laugh, and it's a talent he's obviously keen to market far and wide. I suggest you sign up for this particular grand tour of duty.

John Gilbert



Brian Lumley, Whitley Strieber and David Morrell. Simply put, Etchison is a world-class observer of the horror scene on both sides of the Atlantic.

There's no sense in pointing out a selection of the best stories here — *The Complete Masters of Darkness* is one of the handful of anthologies which immediately merit addition to the special shelf we reserve for the classics. Hopefully, Etchison will someday continue the series with a fourth volume — this is really too rewarding a concept to conclude here.

Stanley Water



## THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF NEW WORLD SCIENCE FICTION

Edited by Isaac Asimov, Harry Waugh, Martin H Greenberg  
Publisher Robinson  
Format PB, £5.99



According to the press blurb about this book, British writers started a new wave in SF in the early 60s, which was quickly matched only by the Americans. So that is presumably why three Americans tackled the task of editing this anthology of ten short science fiction novels from the 1960s.

Excuse the sarcasm, but I sometimes feel the same way about the Americans that British motorcycle fans feel about the Japanese. We under-exploit our British editing talent, bemoan the fact that anthologies don't sell and then buy anything that's going from the Americans. Luckily, my quirky

xenophobia quickly passed in this case because the contents of this volume are very tasty.



Most of the novels will be familiar to die-hard SF fans but for those of you, like myself, who hadn't even pipped the magic ten years of age in the '60s, I will encapsulate the contents. Someone is out to sabotage Roger Zelazny's *The Eve of Rumko*, Keith Laumer's hero plays with fire and Prometheus during the famous *Night of the Trolls*, Mack Reynolds, Randall Garrett, Dean McLaughlin and Gordon R Dickson foreshadow militaristic science fiction with *Mercenary*, *High Treason*, *Hawk Among Sparrows* and *Soldier*, Ask Not, Anne McCaffrey contributes the birth of dragons and literary legend with *Weyr Search*, Philip Jose Farmer takes a tumble on the *Suicide Express*, Rick Raphael calls in a Code Three, and Robert Silverberg plays with humour in *How it Was When The Past Went Away*. Though the editorial skills of Asimov, Waugh and the prolific Greenberg

ensure a high standard of fare, it is *Night of the Trolls*, *The Suicide Express* and *Weyr Search* that are likely to get fans buying this book. The anthology will certainly not suit every SF fan's agenda, but it does highlight the growth of today's masters and shows up the lack of talent in some contemporary brand-named writers.

Andy Braille



## THE NEW DOCTOR WHO ADVENTURES — TIMEWYRM: GENESYS

John Peel  
Publisher Doctor Who Books  
Format PB £3.50



Those of you who, like me, sat through Thursday afternoon ancient history classes couldn't fail to have been fascinated by stories of the Mesopotamians and their greatest hero Gilgamesh, and it's in this time period that *Timewyrm: Genesis* is set.

I've never been a great fan of Sylvester McCoy's portrayal of the Doctor, probably because I spent too many years watching him prattling around in *Vision On!*. Thus I began to read the book with negative feelings, but happily I was very wrong. The story starts with an evil creature called Qataka, who found immortality by replacing her flesh with a cybernetic metal shell after being forced to abandon her spaceship when attacked by her old enemy Unipainism. She lands on earth in 2700 BC and poses as





the goddess Ishtar to put a devilish plan into operation — she wants to enslave the earth and ultimately destroy it, but the Doctor turns up in the nick of time to stop her.



During a routine clearout of the TARDIS memory banks he stumbled on a warning from one of his old selves to beware the Teymym. On arrival in 2700, the Doctor and Ace fall in with Gilgamesh, king of the city of Uruk, who is on a spying mission to Kish, the city in which Ishtar has taken over.

The Doctor barely survives his first contact with Ishtar, so he sends Ace, Gilgamesh and a songsmith called Avram to find Unapishtim and enlist his aid. You can be assured that the tale does to see a happy ending, but what of the terrible Teymym? You'll have to read the book to find out.

The Doctor Who TV series lasted nearly thirty years, and having been a fan for twenty or so of those years I was sad to see it axed by the BBC. But this collection of books (there are three others) will I'm sure go a long way towards keeping the memory of one of the true heroes of the twentieth century alive.

Mark Caswell



## BLACK PLUME

David Madsen  
Publisher Grafton  
Format PB, £3.99



During the late '70s and early '80s, it became a fashion for writers to take characters from real life and incorporate them into their fictions. The list was short but memorable and included Robert Anton Wilson's *Illuminati* books and Marc Olden's *Poe Must Die*. It is from this trend that David Madsen probably got the idea to write the suppressed memoirs of Edgar Allan Poe.

The novel contains many details of Poe's life, together with a moderately interesting, though somewhat contrived, storyline. Poe is living with his mother and bride-to-be Virginia. He has a reasonable job on a local paper but

David Madsen

## Black Plume

Edgar Allan Poe



# DANGEROUS DEVICE

## GRIDLOCK

Ben Elton  
Publisher Macdonald  
Format HB £9.95

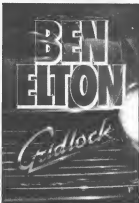


Geoffrey Peason suffers from cerebral palsy — by his own definition, he's 'a spasm'. This disability means he's overlooked by the vast majority of people he comes into contact with, a grave error as he's one of the most gifted research scientists in the country.

However, knowledge can be a dangerous thing, and Geoffrey's latest invention, a terribly hush-hush device, has brought him to the attention of Sam Turk, an unprincipled, unconventional businessman — and a contract killer organisation. Geoffrey has designed a hydrogen engine, pollution-free and efficient enough to drive cars to 70-plus mph, which could cripple the oil industry, revolutionise the automobile business and cause havoc for the Minister of Transport.

Although a relatively low-key character, Digby Parkhurst (Ben Elton's mythical minister) represents the central theme of this novel. I hate to say 'the moral' but, as with his first book, the very green eco-thriller *Stark*, Elton has a political axe to grind from start to finish. This time he lectures on over-subscribed car ownership, the road crowding and traffic jams this causes and the fact that building more roads would add to rather than solve the nightmarish problem. I don't object to his opinions, I just balk at their overstatement in *Gridlock*.

The difficulties and prejudices faced by CP sufferers and people confined to wheelchairs (like Geoffrey's friend Deborah) are more immediate



and important issues and Elton is to be commended for raising them — few high-profile authors would broach the subject. And it certainly makes a welcome change from enduring the usual square-jawed action man and nubile heroine; Geoffrey and Deborah are more believable and affable for their disabilities.

Unfortunately, *Gridlock* hasn't been written particularly well. The occasional errors of form and spelling can be ignored but the sloppy punctuation can disturb the rhythm of the story.

There's plenty to smile at and the occasional chuckle escaped my lips but Mr Elton's wit and wry observation are spread rather thinly in *Gridlock*, and the drama and action scenes are insufficient compensation. It's adequate for a rainy day but lacks the consistency and coherence of an artistically successful novel — although by virtue of Ben Elton's fame, it's near-guaranteed great commercial success.

Warren Lapworth



wants to become a world-famous writer. His humdrum life is shattered when he accompanies a friend to see a mother and daughter duo of psychics. Their method of reading the future is rather sensual, relying on intimate bodily contact and a heavy dose of laudanum.

Poe finds himself obsessed by these women and when they are murdered in the most brutal of circumstances, he begins to drink and becomes addicted to laudanum. He eventually loses his job and descends into poverty. But then a journalist friend is murdered by the friend who killed the psychics, and Poe decides on a course of vengeance with the help of the local Corsican community. The finale shows that, beneath the skin, Poe was a morally strong man but it also hints at the pattern for the rest of his tragically short life.

An interesting, though not original, concept is handled with moderate flair by a reasonably adept writer, but unfortunately the whole thing flops when treated as the memoir of a great writer. Madsen just does not have the talent to mimic the master's style and this book contains none of the ecstatic fire of Poe's poetry and prose. Historical accuracy is not enough — style is important in such a work, and Madsen just isn't up to it.

John Gilbert



## THE BATMAN MURDERS

Craig Shaw Gardner  
Publisher Penguin  
Format PB £3.99



Prominent members of Gotham society are disappearing, a crackpot religion calling itself the Church Of Perpetual Happiness has sprung up and Batman's arch nemesis The Joker has returned with one of his most sinister plots yet. He plans to turn all of Gotham's citizens into Batmen for his own amusement. The head of the Church Of Perpetual Happiness, one Reverend Droll, provides the cash for the scheme and The Joker sets about brainwashing his victims into believing they are Batman. Following a couple of burglaries and after several men have been found dead in Batman costumes, the real Batman takes up the case. This story takes place shortly after the death of Jason Todd (the second Robin) who was killed by The Joker, so Batman is out for vengeance rather than justice.

Things don't become any easier when Dick Grayson (the original Robin) offers to help find the link between The Joker and Reverend Droll's organisation. At first there is animosity between the two men, but in the end Batman allows Dick to join the search. Dick enters the church and finds that

Droll uses similar hypnotic means for recruitment as The Joker, and he manages to escape the Reverend's clutches only to fall foul of The Joker himself. Can Batman save his friend in time and destroy his worst enemy? There is only one way to find out.



Personally, I find the Batman character very shallow — he fights only one adversary and The Joker is such a dangerous lunatic I doubt that even Batman could kill him (but he still tries). Most people raved over the film but I wasn't very fond of it, and the same is true of this book. It starts well enough, but it isn't given enough time to develop into a believable story. Diehard Bat fans may find this a worthy purchase, though.

Mark Caswell



# WEREWOLF LOVE

## WILDERNESS

Dennis Danvers  
Publisher Simon and Schuster  
Format HB, £13.99

 While we're all spouting on about vampires in this issue, Dennis Danvers has their blood twins, werewolves, on his mind.

*Wilderness* is his first novel, and to categorise it as horror would be a disservice. It is a romantic love story, a modern gothic tale which plays science off against the arcane inhabitants of the dark woods.

You couldn't get much more modern-day than the travel agency in which heroine Alice White works. She has one of the prime contact jobs in which she meets thousands of people. Yet she has a fear of intimacy and, as a result, the closest she has come to love is frantic sex sessions during one-night stands.

Self-imposed solitude is the only way she can keep secret her curse...during the season of the full moon she locks herself in the basement of her

house and transforms into a wolf. Her secret is safe until she meets her first true love, a biologist called Erik Summers. Alice trusts him enough to risk telling him the truth and afterwards asks him in the time-honoured tradition whether he can still love her. Although Erik does not reject her outright, his hesitation to confirm his love almost destroys Alice and leaves him to re-evaluate his life both professionally and socially.

Danvers demonstrates that those two age-old opposites, science and the occult, can attract if love is involved in the marriage. The wilderness of the title refers to the barrens of the human mind and soul, tied rather neatly into the cliché image of the rich harvest moon hovering above a forest of silhouetted trees. Apart from that profoundly atavistic image, this book is not a cliché and is guaranteed to draw attention to the craft of this inspired new writer.

John Gilbert




Sent to the planet Colostomy IV for R and R (Rutting and Rotgut to any trooper), Bill is spotted by a female satyr whilst walking on the beach and dragged to the faded fields of Ozymandias. There he meets (and falls in love with) a beautiful girl named Irma.

It's not long before Bill is as usual up to his neck in trouble, after Irma is kidnapped by a huge bird with Hi-Fi speakers mutated to its head. Also, out of hunger Bill has killed one of the sacred doves and in doing so has invoked the wrath of the Fury Eumensuckadees (three ladies in very natty business suits with foul tempers). He is cursed with the Grime Of The Ancient Marinator, which basically means he is stuck with the rotting carcass of the dove slung round his neck until he can lift the curse.



## FEAR

L Ron Hubbard  
Publisher New Era  
Format HB, £14.95

 L Ron Hubbard has written over 260 novels, novelettes, short stories and plays, plus 29 international bestsellers, during the past few years. So says his publisher, who adds that total world sales are 95 million and rising, making Hubbard one of the biggest-selling authors of all time.

His latest release, coincidentally called *Fear*, should therefore rightly be a talking point amongst critics. It has already been hailed by the likes of Stephen King, Ray Bradbury and Isaac Asimov, but frankly I wonder if it truly merits all the attention.

*Fear* is a reasonably competent novel with an intelligent, if dated, concept — though that's not surprising as it was originally written in the 1940s. Professor James Lowry is a man to whom logic is everything. He doesn't believe in demons and is happy to say so in an articulately-reasoned newspaper article. His bosses at the college are not happy. They sack him for bringing the great god of science into disrepute, but that's only the start of his problems.

As his personal life falls to pieces, he loses four hours during one day. When he starts to investigate these missing moments he soon discovers that his scorn of the paranormal might be misplaced.

Political misgivings concerning Hubbard's life aside, I am determined to skip over all the New Era hype and treat this book as a work of literature. Sparsely written — and on thick paper — *Fear* has an elderly storyline in which only slivers of brilliance knife through black clouds of consternation. Dean R Koontz, Ron Serling, Richard Matheson and the unbeatable Charles Beaumont have all handled the same subject with greater panache, and Hubbard is hard-

pushed to compete in such glittering company.  
Andy Braire



## BILL THE GALACTIC HERO ON THE PLANET OF BOTTLED BRAINS

Harry Harrison/Robert Sheckley  
Publisher VG/SF  
Format PB £3.99



It's cliché time again, folks, with our favourite Trooper from the 65th Deep Space Screaming Killers, who as usual finds himself up the proverbial creek without a paddle.



Spaceships are disappearing in the vicinity of a planet called Tsuris and the reluctant Bill is sent to investigate. The Tsurians are strange ethereal creatures with no physical shape, but they do have the ability to take over other people's bodies. Through his complete inability to do anything right, Bill's ship crash lands on Tsuris and his body is taken to the house of one of the billion Tsurians who reside in bottles until a suitable host body can be found. Often the mind of the unfortunate body is discarded, but a Tsurian called Ilyria

takes a shine to Bill and makes sure that his mind is stored in the computer that runs the planet. This task proves tedious even for Bill's tiny brain, but help is at hand from his old pal Brownnose and the crew of the Starship Gumption. It would take too long to outline the rest of the plot but suffice it to say that Bill finally sorts the whole mess out with the help of his pals.

The humour in *Bill The Galactic Hero On The Planet Of Bottled Brains* is very hit and miss. That was the main reason I wasn't overly fond of the first two offerings — *Bill The Galactic Hero* and *Bill The Galactic Hero On The Planet Of Robot Slaves*. The good parts are very amusing but most of the so-called humour is too groan-inducing for words. This is a real shame because I greatly respect and admire Harry Harrison's work, but this 'slapstick' SF doesn't suit his style at all. Please, Mr Harrison, give up with Bill and concentrate on another Slippery Jim Di Griz story.

Mark Caswell



## BILL THE GALACTIC HERO ON THE PLANET OF TASTELESS PLEASURE

Harry Harrison/David Bischoff  
Publisher VG/SF  
Format HB £13.99



Bill is still having trouble with his foot — he lost his own in *Bill The Galactic Hero* and has been making do with various stand-ins ever since — and he now discovers that instead of being a clawed alligator's appendage it is a clown hoof. Due to contracting a hideous deep space infection, Bill now has a mood foot...it's a satyr's hoof because Bill's mind is always on sex and Satyrs are renowned for doing you know what all the time.

Firstly he must rescue Irma and secondly seek the answer to the question 'How can a person achieve peace with his fellow creatures?'. The rescue part can easily be achieved by a visit to Zeus on Mount Olympus. Bill soon discovers Mount Olympus isn't all as easy to climb, so he niches a lift with Rick the Supernal Hero (and his parrot Archimedes) who is in search of the Holy Bar and Grill to sample a pint of Holy Grail stout. Bill joins Rick's ship, is given the task of clearing up after the parrot and things go rapidly downhill from there on. Bill is once more chucked into the trick of it.

Yet another Bill novel escapes from the typewriter of Harry Harrison, and so to say I didn't find this offering even vaguely amusing. Even in paperback I would think twice about forking out for *Bill The Galactic Hero On The Planet Of Tasteless-Pleasure*, but £14 for the hardback version is daylight robbery.

Mark Caswell



## ETERNAL LIGHT

Paul McAuley  
Publisher Gollancz,  
Format HB, £14.99



Somewhere in *Eternal Light* there's a great pulp novel struggling to get out. There's a hypervelocity star hurtling towards Earth, a stampede of huge alien animals, ferocious extra-terrestrials threatening the future of the universe and even a pilot who turns off her targeting computer in the best Star Wars tradition.

You read countless scenes which retrospectively stun with their imagination, but at the time don't quite work as well as they should. McAuley doesn't seem able to pull off a Stableford or Niven-style mix of pulp and hard science. In fact, I'm fairly sure



he doesn't really want to. While the science is certainly hard, the pulp lacks compulsion. For a start McAuley is reluctant to make anyone a hero, everyone in this book seems either to be simply self-serving or driven by factors beyond their control.

More convincing than the characterisation is the science, which is indeed pretty hard. Time and again McAuley produces awesome spacescapes and cosmic events on the cutting edge of physics. Unfortunately, I'm always a little wary of such scientific riffs, unless you've got a good understanding of the basics of quantum theory you're a bit lost about what is fact and what McAuley is making up.

The basics of the plot aren't massively complex (although the details

are certainly convoluted). A future Earth sends a faster-than-light ship to investigate the hypervelocity star and confront its makers. There's a feel rather like Disney's *Black Hole* movie, but this time the zealots seeking audience are religious freaks. And religion could well be appropriate to what they find — a form of life which may be God, and certainly seems all-powerful, but probably isn't.

Yet for all my reservations, this massive 384-page book throws out many more ideas in more detail than any number of lesser novels. It's big and ambitious, a sprawling pinball machine which rattles around an interesting bunch of characters and concepts to fine, but flawed, result. If you realise that the hype's promise — to read it is to rediscover SF's sense of wonder — doesn't cover compelling plotting or even a truly coherent notion of its aims, then this book will keep you entertained and stimulated for a good while.

Stuart Wynne



## THE DARK DESCENT: THE COLOUR OF EVIL

Edited by David G Hartwell  
Publisher Grafton  
Format PB, £4.99



Literary historian David Hartwell has found the perfect way in which to present the history and flavour of the horror genre in one massive 491-page book: through its classic stories.

The long introduction, in which Hartwell reveals the genesis of the project and looks at the psychology of horror history, is followed by one of Stephen King's best short stories *The Reach* — who can forget Stella Flanders and her ghosts?



Hartwell continues with what he obviously considers to be the best stories from those writers he deems masters of the craft: M.R. James' short but spritely *The Ash Tree*, Lovecraft's rambling *The Call of Cthulhu*, *The Summer People* by Shirley Jackson, Harlan Ellison's award-winning frenzy *The Whimper of Whipped Dogs*, gothic master Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Young Goodman Brown*, Le Fanu's *Mr Justice Harbottle*, Ray Bradbury's *The Crowd*, Fritz Leiber's *Belsen Express*, Robert Bloch's *Yours Truly*, Jack the Ripper, Karl Edward Wagner's *Sticks*, Charles L. Grant's *If Damon Comes*, Manly Wade

Wellman's *Vandy, Vandy*, and — one of my favourites — Robert Ackman's *Larger Than Ourselves*.

The introductory remarks above each story come in useful when judging the adequacies of those writers who are not quite so well known. The crème de la crème here include Lucy Clifford's chilling *My Mother*, Michael Shea's *The Autopsy* and John Collier's *Evening Primrose*, all of which come close to catching the talents of Bloch and Bradbury.

A healthy chunk of darkest evil, *The Dark Descent* is a super-anthology full of the stories you should have on your shelf. Its only problem is a lack of co-ordination. It would have been good to see some sort of historical linkage between the stories to back up Hartwell's contention of a dark descent toward the core of horror. That's sad, but don't let it put you off this affordable volume. It is super value for money, and that's rare in publishing these days!



## THE MAGIC SPECTACLES

James P. Blaylock  
Publisher Morrison  
Format HB, £13.95



If you ever bought a pair of those old X-ray specgimmick glasses and were disappointed by the prosaic way in which they worked, you'll love this dark but enchanting fantasy.

The specs transport two eager young boys, John and Danny, into the land of faerie where nursery rhyme characters meet the archetypes of folklore — goblins, fairies and ghosts join forces with the voluminous figure of Mr Deener, the original Humpty-Dumpty by all accounts, who can do magic with bits of coloured glass and has a craving for jellied doughnuts.

# TIME TRAVELLERS!

## THE SORCERESS AND THE CYGNET

Patricia A McKillip  
Publisher Pan  
Format HB, £15.99, PB, £7.99



Gypsies have always fascinated me, so when I found out that the authoress of the innovative *Riddle-Master* of *Hed* books had written a novel about travellers, or Wayfolk as she calls them, my interest was piqued.

These Wayfolk certainly follow in the gypsy tradition. They hate the confines of four walls, read the future through a variety of different physical devices and tell stories around bright log fires at night.

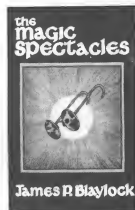
They also have a definite travelling pattern until one year when some of the band decide to visit the warm Delta rather than Hunter Hold during the winter months. Corleau is one of this group and it is he who discovers that they have travelled further than they should — into a world outside time.

It is also Corleau who dares to penetrate the secrets of the Dark House and join in the search for the heart of the Cygnet, in a bid to help free the Wayfolk from their prison outside time. Trick follows trap as the boy meets Nyx Ro who tells him about the strange birth of the world and the terrible times of judgement ahead.



Written with a silky, lyrical style, *The Sorceress and the Cygnet* is a classic of quest fantasy which shows that McKillip has vastly improved as a fantasy writer since the *Riddle-Master* trilogy. It is good to see that some contemporary writers still see the written word as more than a means of getting across their clever storylines. Fantasy readers should take note and celebrate this impressively constructed achievement.

John Gilbert



Trapped in the land beyond the glasses, John and Danny must, like Alice in Looking Glass land, find answers to questions that have vexed rhyme scholars since time immemorial. Who are the tiny creatures that whisper in Mr Deener's ears? What do they say? And is Mr Deener so like Humpty Dumpty that they will have to put him together again before they can leave this world where the truth is more often than not an inversion of our reality. Blaylock alone has the answers and he'll part with his pieces of the puzzle only if you buy his book. There should be little trouble there, though. It's a gem.

Andy Braille



# NO GUTS, NO GLORY

## SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

Howard Shore  
Label: MCA

Not one drop of blood is spilled on this soundtrack. Like the movie it supports, Howard Shore's music is subtle and low key, a straight-jacket full of energy which threatens to explode in a miasm of felling limbs and gouging nails.

There are two major themes in this work. The first is established and associated with Clerice Starling right at the start as she is running through the woods at the FBI training centre. It follows her throughout the piece but, roughly halfway through, Shore nails the theme to another image — that of the screaming lambs. It is done with a subtle finesse and later in the score, as the effects crescendo, Starling's terror at those imagined sounds of slaughter are all too evident.

The second theme is, of course,

Lecter's: a combination of soft strokes, brutal glee and precision which Shore develops during Hannibal's escape and subsequent revelry in freedom. Both themes are distinct and often played against each other, but at the end of the film you realise that they have a common tone and maybe that is why Clerice can play Lecter as well as he can toy with her.

An effective and fitting adjunct to a brilliant movie, Shore's soundtrack is a classic of suspense cinema. It's one you'll want to hear between seeing *Silence of the Lambs* at the cinema and renting it on video.

John Gilbert



## DEATH SHALL RISE

Cancer  
Vinyl Solution

This is the second album from the Telford death metal band and, to be

quite honest, I was pleasantly surprised.

Musically, it's not special, with the exception of the guitar break in 'Tasteless Incest'. What I liked most of all were the lyrics, they appealed to my sick sense of humour. The words paint some really unpleasant pictures, but somehow I don't think one is supposed to take them seriously. 'Maggots eating rotten flesh, Chomping through a fucking mess.' What a charming rhyming couplet. In summary, a surprisingly reasonable album.

Robb the Rev



## SIXES, SEVENS AND NINES

Junk Yard  
Geffen

This is the stuff that power chords were made for. You want it, this band has it — fast songs, slow songs,

acoustic and slide guitars and sounds old and new. No two songs sound the same.

The album opens with a fast one, 'Back on the Streets'. A track full of the supposedly clichéd rock chords which seem to have been given new life and a hard blues feel. The next two tracks are slower and show that these boys have mastered their instruments. 'Slippin' Away' is a slow acoustic song that gradually becomes electric, a beautiful melody heightened by the use of female backing vocalists.

'Misery Loves Company' is a great rock'n'roll song with plenty of honky-tonk piano (Elton sat your heart out), and 'Killing Time' proves beyond doubt that blues will never die. This album is clever, it blends old with new. My foot didn't stop tapping once in forty minutes.

Robb the Rev



# A GUT FULL OF



# CANCER

The name may be noxious, but the three British members of Cancer I met in the bowels of Newsfield quickly impressed upon me that they had serious genre concerns on their minds and in their music.

**M**usicians Carl Stokes, Ian Buchanan and John Walker, together with their American drummer John Hotten, have garnered a reputation for hard, horror-oriented rock since they formed the band in 1987. 'We all had a common interest in horror,' says Carl. 'That seemed to be our main subject matter, so we got together and made a demo which we put around a bit.'

They admit that the band's name is rather 'sick', but it has attracted the attention that every group needs to survive in the rock industry. 'One of our songs that everybody seems to go on about is called 'Cancer, Fucking Cancer,' says Carl. 'It's a song that basically says 'balls to everything, we'll do what we wanna do'. It very slightly follows through from the music on the first album. It's just a name, but it's a name that

nobody can forget.'

The band's horror influences are very specific, culled mostly from film but not necessarily hack and slash. They are interested in Argento movies mostly, says John. 'I base most of my lyrics around them, and I want the lyrics to be tongue-in-cheek. Some of them are serious, but you can't be dead serious about cutting someone's head off. So I go for a Frank Hennenlotter kind of thing with Sam Raimi.'

Musically, Cancer's influences have reflected the death metal scene, but the lyrics on the band's first two albums suggest more than that metal sub-genre. 'We never found our true musical style on our first album,' says John. 'We were playing the field and trying ideas out. And during the time between that first album and the second one we realised that our main influences were in the British heavy metal scene, not American death metal. We could play death metal, but the English influence was very strong.'

It's good to hear that the American glam bands have not had it all their own way, and as proof of the pud Cancer is negotiating a video deal with Nailbiter — the horror video magazine people — and have major American and European tours set for this year. 'The American tour is going to be in the summer, and the European tour will be in September,' says Carl. 'And, if we get to Japan, we'll be over there just before Christmas.'

It sounds like this musical bug is going a long way.



# GRAPHIC DE

This month, among other things, Warren Lapworth witnesses the birth of a new comics company...

Well, not exactly, because it's actually a division of DC, but they are promoting Impact Comics (the exclamation mark doubles as an 'i') as a completely new, independent label. *Legend Of The Shield* 1 (50p), the first of Impact's six titles, completes Sergeant Joseph Michael Higgins' training as armoured US government hero Shield, and — in brief flashback — Higgins' and the original Shield's history.

Frankly, I can't see the reasoning behind DC setting up a new label. Apparently, Impact comics aren't set in DC universe; they'll feature new characters with no connection to DC comics. This is what Marvel did in 1986 with its New Universe line — which pretty much fell flat on its face. Since then, Marvel has released comics outside its universe's continuity (which returned disappointing sales

figures) but hasn't tried to dress them up as some new era in comics.

Judging from *Legend Of The Shield* and trailers for other Impact comics, the 'new' characters (some are resurrected from old series by other publishers) are barely different from others in the DC universe and aren't 'adult' or 'alternative' enough to warrant separation to another label, which was Marvel's justification for setting up the adequately successful Epic line. *Legend Of The Shield*'s mediocre story and reasonably composed but crudely inked art show little potential and, unless the general public are a lot more gullible than I think they are, Impact Comics will receive nothing more than a lukewarm reception.

## ARACHNOMANIA

Yep, Spidey's reached another anniversary issue — not such a rare event as he now has five titles — with *Amazing Spider-Man* 350 (Marvel, 60p). Unlike most of

these special issues, it isn't self-contained, as most of the story's groundwork was laid down last issue. But basically, the Black Fox, aged thief and long-time thorn in Spider-Man's side, has stolen a large emerald, the Dragon's Egg, which once belonged to Doctor Doom's mother. And yep, the classic hooded, armoured villain wants the emerald back, no matter what the cost to human life.

I was disappointed with this anniversary issue as soon as I learned Doctor Doom would be Spidey's foe. I've nothing against the Doc — he's one of my all-time favourite Marvel villains — but he's more suited to the FF, the Avengers and similar high-power combos and power-based scenarios rather than a simple 'chase the gem' plot.

After 18 or so months pencilling the lead Spider-Man title, Erik Larsen has made this his last issue. I won't be sad to see him go; although at first he appeared to be a cheap

McFarlane imitation (a bad artist to be compared with anyway), he developed his own style but it was a tacky one, Spidey's distorted poses (a McFarlane legacy) and most characters' child-like faces particular irritations. From next issue, Mark New Warriors Bagley will be taking up the reins, bringing a new era — art-wise, at least. I look forward to it.

## BLAST FROM THE FUTURE

1991 has already seen the release of a British weekly anthology comic, *Apocalypse's Toxic!*. Now the UK has a monthly anthology comic magazine, John Brown Publishing's *Blast!* (what's the attraction of exclamation marks here?).

The glossy-covered 50-page magazine leads with the ultra-macho, dramatic and excitable monster killer Dr Strongfort Stearn, aka *Mr Monster*. In *Blast!* 1, he treks through the Congo with Kelly (and her remarkably large breasts), his lawyer and newspaper reporter Danny Deadline, and soon faces some ugly adversaries.

This light-hearted massacre is illustrated by the very capable Simon Blesley (which explains the big tits everywhere); his mega-musclebound heroes' dynamic poses and superlative painting and shading techniques are always a joy to behold.

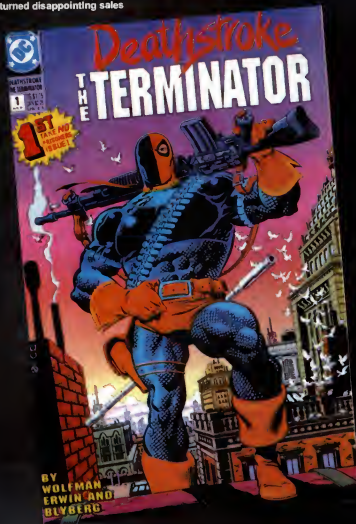
In contrast, Paul Chadwick's *Concrete* is a peace-loving, helpful character. He was once human, but aliens stole his body and transplanted his brain into a concrete-shelled mechanical one. In *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*, *Concrete* opens a mailbox full of fan/begging letters prompted by his appearance on a chat show.

I've never enjoyed *Concrete*'s serene adventures — I find them just plain dull — but Chadwick's accurate, understated art is excellent, and his design of *Concrete* himself is simplistic yet highly appealing.

In 1936 Chicago, Luca Torelli is a hitman best known as *Torpedo*, and is hired to rub out the 'unkillable' Frank 'Forever' Again. This is a basic gangster story with similarly unsophisticated art and brash colouring. 'Nuff said.

When assassin Axel Pressbutton strolls into town, you'd better look for cover. The unstable cyborg is hired by a 31st century satellite company to appear on three chat shows and soon causes havoc.

Pedro Henry's Axel is a wonderfully brash character, the sort of strangely amiable, amusing thug you find in most public bars. Steve Dillon's art is light and simple, complementing



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# TITANS

the story.

Peter Bagge's *Junior* gets followed home in a short, intentionally sour strip, and in the first part of *The Virtual Kiss* Warren Ellis tells us little except that the hero, Lazarus Churchyard, is 80 per cent plastic and immortal, but is being offered a chance at eternal death. D'Israeli's visuals are unusual, appropriate for this story, which shows great potential.

In addition to these comic strips, there's a 24-page *Speakeasy* centre section. This regular mono supplement contains news and reviews of films, videos, books and comics, plus interviews with well-known film and comic stars.

Well, what can one say? *Blast!* presents a refreshing, eclectic collection of European strips from talented writers and artists, plus the informative, well-written *Speakeasy* section, all for just £1.50. True, the line-up isn't as strong for this first issue as I expected, but as *Blast!* settles down and gets into its stride, the selection can only get better; the second issue is available as you read this so you'll be able to assess any modifications yourself. *Blast!*'s already considerable value for money puts it at least on par with *Deadline* as the UK's top comic magazine.

## T. TOO

Slade Wilson, alias *Deathstroke: The Terminator* (DC, £1.00) is the New Titans' version of The Punisher, a costumed vigilante

with finely honed armed and unarmed combat skills, but less of a loner and with a prettier outfit. In the first issue of his own comic, his ex-wife Adeline is shot and the train she was travelling on is destroyed by an anonymous adversary.

I'm a sucker for a good design, which is why I'm fond of *The Terminator*. His costume incorporates no special or original ideas, but its elements work well and its blue/orange colour scheme is effective. I don't like Slade as himself, because he's got a stupid goatee beard, but that's another story...

Mary Wollman was never one for subtlety and he's not about to change: the first *Deathstroke* plot is packed with drama and revelation (most of the reasons for which I can't reveal without

## KILLING STROKE



spoiling the comic for you), the sort of story most comics reserve until the readers have become familiar with a character and are eager for a shake-up.

Steve Erwin's artwork is well composed and dynamically drawn — a shame Inker Will Blyberg didn't pay attention in places — a fitting match for the story. Some New Titans fans may find a comic devoted to *The Terminator* too militaristic but others, and complete strangers to the Titans, will warm to it. A pity it isn't as cheap as many DC titles.

## POND-SKIPPING HORROR

Various British writers and artists, spearheaded by Gary Crutchley and Shane Oakley, created horror comic strips, gathered them together as the *Killing Stroke* anthology and sent them to Melibu Graphics in the States. They chose to publish them in their *Eternity Comics*

division, so now British horror is being imported back into the country!

The five stories in the first issue deal with disgruntled employees, worried children, war, unfaithful husbands and the delusions of a psychopath. *Artwork* is mono and suitably grim and sketchy, sometimes bordering on the crude but always effective. The terror tales aren't sophisticated or original but are worth a browse.

My favourite was *Home Of The Brave*, a brooding man recounting his past worries as he waits for the demons to arrive, and the sentiments behind *John Smith Beats The System* will be familiar to many an office worker. If the strips in the remaining three issues of this series take note of said stories and build on their style, *Killing Stroke* will be a valuable purchase.

## ROYAL FLUSH

I regret that part four of *King Hell/Tundra's* five-issue limited series, *Brat Pack* was the first one brought to my attention. It's hard for me to define as the unlikely super-heroes and (near-future?) setting Slumberg were undoubtedly properly introduced in the first couple of issues. But Slumberg is clearly a very chaotic, dangerous place to live, and its heroes — Mink, Puke, Blacky, Moon Mistress and so on — are the wildest, most stimulating and unusual characters I've had the good fortune to meet in a long, long time.

*Brat Pack* is by Rick Veitch and his artwork is almost as distinctive and exciting as his writing; it has perhaps the best mono shading I've ever seen, which compensates for occasional basic form. *Brat Pack* 5 is at the top of my shopping list and I'll be searching for back issues at the next available opportunity. Definitely one to check out.

## BRAT PACK



## Meet the ghost with the most **BEETLEJUICE**

Not content with his world domination of the cinema screens, our intimate ami Beetlejuice, that bio-exorcist to the stars, has just negotiated himself a cartoon deal with Warner Home Video.

So pleased is the ol' bug that he's given us ten copies of his first cartoon anthology, which contains three completely new stories from the hereafter. All you grown-up kids have to do to win a copy is answer the following question: Who wrote the screenplay for the original *Beetlejuice* movie? Plot your answer onto the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it to: Beet the Bug Compo, **FEAR**, Newsfield, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1JW. All entries should be in by August 5, 1991, and remember — if you don't want a visit from the ghost with the most, no employees of **FEAR**, Newsfield or Warner Home Video (or their families and friends) may take part in this piece of fun.

## Welcome to the new **MILLENNIUM**

Take a trip in time, courtesy of Warner's latest SF video release *Millennium*.

Air crash investigator Bill Smith (Kris Kristofferson) is knocked out by a strange weapon found in a wreck. While immobilised, Louise Baltimore (Cheryl Ladd) arrives from the future to retrieve the gun which could give clues to humanity's desperate battle for survival one thousand years' hence. But Smith has retained part of the gun and Baltimore must meet him a day before his accident if she is to stop a devastating timequake.

It's a power-packed, all-action stuff with spectacular special effects that'll get even the most atrophied mind jiving. What more could you ask? So don't! Just enter the competition, in which we're offering ten copies of the video, by telling us which '70s television detective series gave Cheryl Ladd her big break? Jot the answer on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it to: Time and Again Compo, **FEAR**, Newsfield, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1JW. All entries should be in by August 5, 1991, and no employees of **FEAR**, Newsfield or Warner Bros (or any of their nearest and dearest) may take part.

## Win a piece of British vampire film history **DAWN**

This independently-made vampire movie about one girl's love for a very modern vampire has yet to break on video — but we have five especially commissioned copies, taken from the Master and ready to give away to our competition winners.

If you want to know more about this contender for the Hammer Dracula crown, look at this issue's Vampire

Section in which the story of this fascinating film is exclusively told. Then tell us who played Nosferatu in the original black and white version of the film. Send your answers on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope to:

Dawn Is Breaking Compo, **FEAR**, Newsfield, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1JW. All entries should be in by August 5, 1991, and, as usual, no employees of **FEAR** or Newsfield (or their relatives) may take part.

## **FEAR** competitions

## Put your boots on for **THE GREAT LA EARTHQUAKE**

It was bound to happen sometime, and Capital Video was just lucky that the cameras were rolling to capture this fictional drama when Los Angeles fell prey to the Big One. Joanne Kerns stars as Dr Claire Winslow, a seismologist who discovers a sure-fire formula for predicting earthquakes. After a test run she discovers that a massive tremor is on the way. Does she tell the politicians, the press or the public? To find out, you'll have to enter our competition in which ten videos and five tee-shirts are up for grabs.

Just name the machine on which they measure earthquake ferocity. Put your answer on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope and send it to: Quake Compo, **FEAR**, Newsfield, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 1JW. All entries should be in by August 5, 1991 and no employees of **FEAR**, Newsfield or Capital Home Video (or their relatives) should take part — or you'll find yourself at an active epicentre.



**FEAR  
ISSUE  
No. 32  
ON SALE  
AUGUST 6**